History of the Sikhs
Vol. III
Sikhs Domination of the Mughal Empire, 1764–1803

History of the Sikhs is planned as a five volume survey aiming to present a comprehensive view of the rise, growth and development of Sikh thought and action in every direction. This volume *Sikh Domination of the Mughal Empire, 1764–1803* is third in the series. The whole series is based on original contemporary sources in Persian, Marathi, Gurumukhi, Urdu, Hindi, and English known to exist in India and abroad.

The dominating theme of the third volume is how and why the Sikhs missed numerous opportunities of establishing a Sikh State over the whole northern India. Najib-ud-daulah Rohilla, the first dictator of Delhi, and the vanquisher of Marathas and the Jats, publicly confessed having failed to subdue the Sikhs. Once he paid them a blackmail of eleven lakhs of rupees. His son and successor saved himself by embracing Sikhism. His widow and son lived in the Panjab on a Jagir granted by Jassa Singh Ramgarhia in his safe custody for seventeen years. The Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II (1759–1806) was prepared to place himself and his empire under Sikh protection. Najaf Khan, his prime minister, granted sovereign rights to the Sikhs. Mahadji Sindhia, the second dictator of the Mughal Empire, always maintained peace with them inspite of their frequent provocations. Lord Cornwallis, the British Governor-General in vain cajoled and coaxed them in order to secure the liberty from Sikh captivity of Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Stuart who was set free after ten months on receiving a ransom. The Jat rajas of Bharatpur, Rajput princes, Nawabs of Oudh, and the hill rajas, all troubled before them.

As the Sikhs had risen to power and predominance from extreme poverty and penury, their imagination could not go outside their homeland acquisition of gold from the rich, rakhi from Zamindars, and Kambh from artisans.

Professor Hari Ram Gupta had his education at Lahore. He was a lecturer at Forman Christian College, Lahore, founder Principal of Vaish College, Bhiwani (1944), and Head of the Department of History of Aitchison College, Lahore. He also served as professor and Head of the Department of History and Dean University Instruction; Punjab University, Chandigarh, later he worked as honorary professor in Department of History, University of Delhi. He has also been honorary professor of history at Dev Samaj College for Women, Ferozpur, Punjab.

Among the important works of Dr Gupta are five volumes of *History of the Sikhs; Punjab on the Eve of First Sikh War; Marathas and Panipat; Sir Jadunath Sarkar Commemoration Volumes; Life and Work of Mohan Lal Kashmiri*, with a foreword by Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, and three volumes on *India-Pakistan War, 1965*. He passed away in April 1992.

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HISTORY OF THE SIKHS

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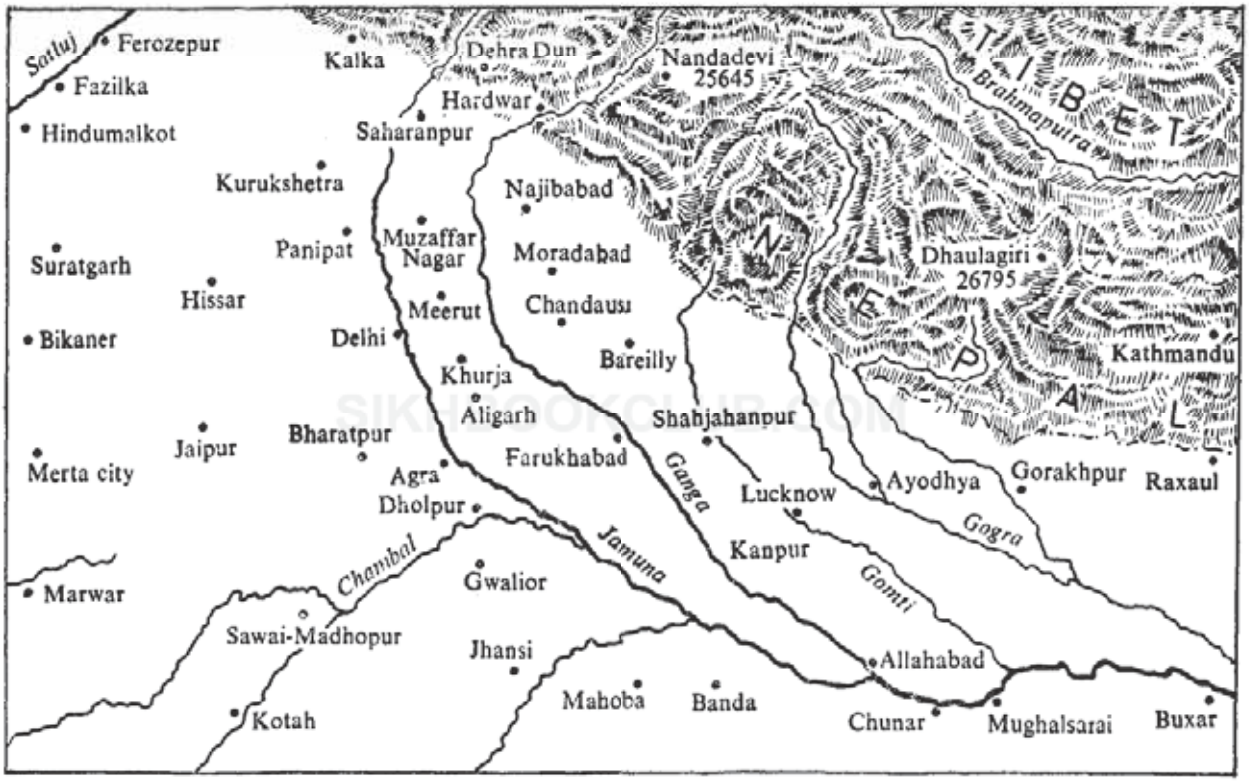
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THE SIKH DOMINATION OF THE MUGHAL EMPIRE



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HISTORY OF THE SIKHS

Vol. III

Sikh Domination of the Mughal Empire

(1764-1803)

Hari Ram Gupta
with a Foreword by
Sir Jogendra Singh

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Dedicated
to
Sir Jadunath Sarkar
in
Veneration and Gratitude

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"The old Sirdar
Holds for his court a high durbar;
Summons each vassal and each friend,
And bids his gallant sons attend.
The turbaned Sikhs, a wiry band,
Flock at their aged Chief's command,
With eagle eye, and bearing bold,
Polished armour, chains of gold;
Unshorn locks that ample lie,
Slender spears, that quivering fly;
Costly shawls and broidered vests,
Beards that float upon their breasts;
Stately camels decked with shells,
Prancing steeds, and tinkling bells;
All the sounds and sights that vie,
In pomp of eastern chivalry." *Anonymous*

* * *

"The love of liberty is the love
of others, the love of power
is the love of ourselves."

—William Hazlitt, 1778-1830

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Foreword

Mr. Hari Ram Gupta has the gift of summoning processions of the pictures of the past, and revivifying them with the breath of life. He has delved deep into the records of nearly two hundred years past, and from the fragments of scattered documents built up a connected story, revealing the decay of Moghul Empire and the adventurous rise of the power of the Khalsa.

The gospel of the Gurus had shattered the shell of Superstition and released the spirit from bondage. Men of power no more removed themselves from the field of action in the hope of self-realization in cloistered seclusion. They were awakened by the tenth Guru with a new sense of manhood and animated by a new determination to end all tyrannies by manfully opposing them. The result was the rise to power of a small community of religious devotees into bands of valiant soldiers, who faced the armies of Moghuls and Marhattas without fear. They levied a *Rakhi*, a cess and guaranteed protection from the banks of the Indus to the banks of the Ganges.

These bands, however, failed to unite under a single leader and frequently changed their allegiance. The result was that they failed to realize their high destiny, to unite the country and to give a good government. Had they found a leader, who could command their allegiance and to lead them, a new chapter would have opened in the History of India.

The Khalsa bound in the closest links of brotherhood by the Guru broke into parties and factions and failed to enjoy the fruit of its success or to make any enduring contribution in raising India from a state of dependence into independence and from poverty to power. The Khalsa had the opportunity of uniting India and missed it.

The shadows of the past are still pursuing the present. The

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Khalsa is split up into parties which waste their energies in undermining the strength of the *Panth*. The Sikh Press, unlike the press of other communities, concentrates its attention on person and promotes disruptive influences within the community itself. The leaders, such as they are, are always under the microscope. The Khalsa prays every day for power to overlook the shortcomings of its members, but as soon as prayers are over it fastens its attention on these shortcomings. It cannot be the Sikh religion but some tribal heritage which the community has not been able to overcome in the past as well as in the present.

History is of little value unless we learn from it the lesson of tracing the causes of our failures and by removing the causes build a better future.

Mr. Hari Ram Gupta has held aloft the magic mirror reflecting events which happened nearly two hundred years ago in their true perspective. Let us open our ears and listen eagerly to what the history has to teach. For we who believe in the Guru must learn to see the face of a brother even in an enemy, and when we see a Sikh, in the words of the Guru, must seek his feet and serve him. It is thus that we can fulfil the mission of the Guru.

The Khalsa is deeply indebted to Mr. Gupta for his researches. Every Sikh should read his book and resolve, at all costs, to bring unity within the Panth, and with it power to mould its own future and that of India.

JOGENDRA SINGH
K.C.S.I.
Member for Education
in the Viceroy's
Executive Council

New Delhi,
14-12-1943.

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Preface to the First Edition

Of all the activities of the mind, religion and love, have most profoundly influenced man. It was for religion that the Sikhs of the past generation made the most stupendous sacrifices. The generation of the period under review, however, was impelled only by the love of power, which, divorced from religion, turned into lust.

Guru Gobind Singh had taught the Sikhs to assume two phases of life. In times of peace and prosperity they were to take on the character of a *Bhai* (brother) by becoming meek, humble and serviceable. In days of difficulty and danger they were to act like a stiff-necked hero (*Sardar*), who would stand for fair-play and resist the wrongs done to him and others with all his might and main.

In playing the part of a *Sardar* the Sikhs had done their duty marvellously well, but when the period of adversity was over and that of prosperity commenced they refused to take upon themselves the traits of a *Bhai*.

Previously the Sikhs had followed the principles of universalism by subordinating the individual to the community. Now they pursued the policy of individualism by raising the individual above the will of the community.

It is therefore not surprising to find how those very people who had shown themselves the protectors of the weak and the oppressed during the first three quarters of the eighteenth century, became the persecutors of the innocent and the defenceless.

The story of the deeds of the Cis-Sutlej Sikhs from 1769 to 1799 is one of their almost annual plundering raids into the Upper Gangetic Doab; and a tale either of warfare among themselves or of their struggle with the Mughals, the Marathas, the Rohillas, and George Thomas, an Irish adventurer.

The predatory excursions of the Cis-Sutlej Sikhs have left behind

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nothing but horrid recollections, which fact is not an unprofitable lesson in itself. Like individuals nations are subject to fury and frenzy. This is a natural consequence which follows from rude armies gaining a knowledge of their power. But with this knowledge there was a great lesson. This, unfortunately, the Sikhs had forgotten. The lesson was that if brute force was with them, the intellect that commanded physical power was with the Guru.

The absence of this great factor clouded their wits, blurred their vision, and checked their growth and development. Otherwise there was no dearth of opportunities for the Sikhs to display their energy and enthusiasm; and with a little statesmanship they could have become the masters of nearly the whole of Northern India.

The Mughal Empire lay almost prostrate before them. The Rajputs, the Jats, the Rohillas, and the Nawab of Oudh trembled before their armies. Out of the remaining two powers of all-India importance, the Maratha Empire was a spent force, though this fact was not yet visible. The Marathas were trying to maintain their power, and did their level best to win over the Sikhs against the English who were gradually rising in the east.

The British rule had not yet struck roots in this country. It was only four years earlier that Clive had obtained the Diwani of Bihar, Bengal and Orissa. This had placed immense power in the hands of the Company's merchant-adventurers, who showed no signs of realising any responsibility for the welfare of the people. "It must give pain to an Englishman," wrote Richard Becker, Resident at Murshidabad, on the 8th July, 1769, "to have reason to think that since the accession of the Company to the Dewanee, the condition of the people of the country has been worse than it was before; and yet I am afraid the fact is undoubted... This fine country, which flourished under the most despotic and arbitrary government is verging towards its ruin, while the English have really so great a share in the administration."

A word as regards the material used in this work will not be out of place. The original sources of information in Persian relating to this period fall under four classes: (1) The despatches from various Government officials and generals, such as those sent by Zabita Khan and Mirza Shafi, which give full details of particular events. (2) The reports of the news-writers and spies sent from Delhi, Lucknow, Daranagar, Ghausgarh, Patiala, Amritsar, and other places regarding local occurrences; but these do not supply a

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continuous record nor full details. (3) The summaries of such of these reports and despatches as were read out to the Emperor in the *durbār* and embodied in the *Akhbarat*. They tell us of the daily events at the imperial court, the movements of the Emperor and his ministers, and the news and views current in the capital. The records of this class are copious, though not available in an unbroken series. (4) The instructions of the Emperor and his ministers to various officers on duty. Much of this material has perished; but something can be traced either in the newsletters or in the compilations of certain secretaries in the service of princes or nobles, such as Faqir Khair-ud-din's *Ibratnamah*.

The Marathi sources are of very great value to the historian of this period. The famous historic family of the Deccan, the Hingnes, represented the Peshwa at the imperial capital from 1734 to 1800 A.D. Purshotam Mahadev held the post of the Maratha envoy at Delhi from 1769 to 1783. His son Govind Purshotam, being a minor, Mahadev was succeeded by his faithful clerk Shankaraji Sakhadev; but a brother of the deceased, Dev Rao Hingne, continued in Delhi till 1793. The full correspondence between the Hingne brothers and the Peshwas from 1780 to 1795 A.D. has been published by Rao Bahadur D.B. Parasnis. The Marathi letters published by Rajwade, Sardesai and others chiefly deal with campaigns and diplomacy. All these letters fully reflect the state of the fallen court of Delhi, and to understand the gradual decline of the Mughal Empire, and to diagnose the causes of the sudden collapse of other powers in Northern India, in all of which the Sikhs played a dominant part, "the information contained in these letters is simply invaluable."

The importance of the English records available at the Imperial Record Department (National Achives) of India should not be under-estimated. The huge mass of material in the form of letters, despatches and State papers which passed between the Governors-General and the Residents and their staff at Lucknow, Delhi and Fatahgarh, and other high officials in this country on the one hand, and between the Government of India and the Home Government on the other show us how keenly interested the British Government was in the affairs of Delhi and its neighbourhood.

It remains for me to acknowledge my deep obligation to Sir Jadunath Sarkar to whom this work is dedicated for his kindly placing at my disposal all of his rare collection of Persian manu-

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scripts. I must not fail to record my gratitude to Maharajkumar Raghubir Sinh of Sitamau for having kindly allowed me to have access to his valuable records consisting of a huge mass of Persian news-letters and rare Persian manuscripts most of which are either rotographs or filmed copies from British Museum and India Office. He was also pleased to lend me some of the rare Marathi works which could not be had anywhere in the market. I am further indebted to Dr. S.N. Sen, Keeper of the Records of the Government of India, for kindly providing me all the facilities at his command while I worked in the Imperial Record Department. My thanks are due to Professor Balwant Singh Anand, M.A. (Cantab) for kindly revising this work in the manuscript.

H.R. GUPTA

Lahore,
January, 1944.

Note to the Second Edition

The book has been completely revised. Some obscure points have been clarified. A few corrections of detail have been made, and some doubts have been resolved. Four new chapters have been added. The original text is generally allowed to stand with some modifications, though the title of the book is changed. I am deeply indebted to Shri Sham Lal Gupta, M.Sc., for his kindly preparing the index.

New Delhi
November, 1979

H.R. Gupta

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CHAPTER 1

Condition of the Mughal Empire, 1707-1763

On the way to disruption

The policy of Aurangzeb had unfolded forces of disruption in the centralising tendency of the Mughal Empire, even during his own lifetime. Marathas in the south, Jats and Rohillas in the centre and Sikhs in the north raised their heads. During the disturbed reigns of his weak successors, these forces developed by leaps and bounds. As a result during a short space of time, Marathas became dominant not only in the south but also in the north, carrying their depredations to the very gates of Delhi. The Jats carved out their independent principality in the close neighbourhood of the imperial capitals of Agra and Delhi. Another people known as the Rohillas from Afghanistan made rapid strides in gaining power and territory in the Ganga Doab and Rohilkhand. The two Mughal provinces of Awadh and Haidarabad (Deccan) broke off from the empire and their example was followed by others.

The final death-blow to the remnant of the past glory and prestige of the great Mughals was dealt by the invasions of the dreaded Nadir Shah and his successor Ahmad Shah Durrani, who invaded India no less than eight times. Nadir Shah seized Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Makran, North-West Frontier Province, and Sind. The Durrani seized all these Provinces. Further, during the course of his third invasion in 1752 he wrested the Provinces of Lahore, Multan and Kashmir and the Sarhind division in 1757 from the Mughals. Thus the foreign rule extended over the Indian territory from the Hindukoh and the Arabian Sea to the close neighbourhood of Delhi. The circumstances which led to this deplorable state in the once so mighty an empire are briefly traced below.

Degeneration of the Imperial dynasty

A study of contemporary works leaves on the mind of the reader

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a woeful impression of the court of Delhi. The emperors, their ministers and the nobles were the very embodiment of indolence, moral degradation, cunning, corruption, treachery, misgovernment and selfishness. Their patriotism and political vision were extremely narrow and restricted. The country was unfortunate in having a succession of extremely weak kings.

Bahadur Shah, 1707-1712

Aurangzeb was succeeded by his eldest son Mu'azzam, entitled Bahadur Shah who had won the throne after the bloody battle of Jajau with his brother Azam. The new Emperor, then 64 years old, ruled for 5 years, during which time, not his ability, but prestige of his father held the empire. Bahadur Shah, though a kind and generous ruler, possessed an ineffective personality and he justly earned the nickname of (*Shah-e-Bekhabar*) the "Heedless King."

Jahandar Shah, 1712-1713

On his death in 1712, there again ensued a scramble for the throne among various claimants. Ultimately the eldest son of Bahadur Shah was proclaimed emperor with the title of Jahandar Shah. He was effeminate and cowardly in character. He was struck with terror in the presence of a naked sword, so much so that on one occasion, he had run away from the place, leaving his slippers and his turban falling off his head.[1] He seldom attended to state affairs, and led a life of profligacy and ease. The Emperor fell so violently in love with a low-bred dancing girl, named Lal Kanwar, that he became a mere tool in her hands and did whatever she dictated him. He also became so dead to all feelings of shame and honour, that in passing through the bazars, he seized the wives and daughters of the people.[2]

Farrukh Siyar, 1713-1719

After a disgraceful rule of eleven months he was dethroned by Farrukh Siyar who was a thorough weakling and had no resolution, no constancy and no decision of his own. He was low-spirited and sordidly inclined. If at any time he showed any liberality in his

[1]Latif's *Panjab*, 182-85.
[2]Khushhal Chand, III, 34a; Latif's *Panjab*, 185.

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disposition, it was when he enjoyed the company of low, vile people, equally destitude of morals and ability. Then he would freely bestow on them presents which they did not know what to do with, and offices which they were unable to manage.[1]

Two dying princes, 1719

In 1719 Farrukh Siyar was first blinded and afterwards strangled to death by the famous Sayyid Brothers, who then tried in quick succession two other weakly sprigs of the House of Babar. Rafi-ud-darjat was the first to ascend the throne. Like his predecessor he was completely in the power of the two Sayyids, who exercised full control over his person and palace. He died after a brief reign of about three months. His elder brother Rafi-ud-daulah was then raised to the throne. His story is no better than that of his brother. He was so much in the hands of the Sayyids that his going in and coming out of the court, what he ate and what he wore, in short his every act depended on their sweet will. He also passed away after a short rule of three months.[2]

Muhammad Shah, 1719-1748

The choice now fell on Muhammad Shah, whose accession seems to have restored to the throne of Delhi a little stability. He ruled for nearly thirty years. But this period of three decades, even though there were no civil wars, failed to arrest the process of decay which had already set in. The new Emperor was an inexperienced youth of 17 and possessed little resolution and enterprise. Before his accession he had been in confinement in the palace for seven years and so had received no education or training in the art of government. He was extremely handsome, of a strong and splendid build, and possessed natural intelligence and foresight. But actuated by his youthful passions, folly and pride, he resigned himself to frivolous pursuits and the company of wicked and mean characters.[3] He utterly neglected the administration of the kingdom and so everything went to rack and ruin.

A certain girl named Koki, the daughter of a Faqir, had

[1] *Siyar*, II, 21.

[2] *Bayan*, 170. Harcharandas accused the Sayyids of having poisoned these two brothers. *Chahar Gulzar Shujai*, 384a.

[3] *Tarikh-e-Hindi* of Rustam Ali in Elliot ,VIII, 43.

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fascinated Muhammad Shah so much, that she was entrusted by the Emperor with the Imperial scrutoire and private signet. Her signatures were put on state papers and she issued orders in her own name. Not even the greatest nobles of the court could approach the Emperor except through Koki. About this state of things Asaf Jah Nizam-ul-Mulk, the founder of the Haidarabad dynasty, who was then the Prime Minister of the Delhi Empire, wrote a quatrain, the last verse of which is:

Mardān nakunand khāk bar sar cheh kunand,
Imroz zane bajāe Ālamgir ast.
(What else can men do but throw dust on their heads, as to-day a woman sits in place of Aurangzeb.)[1]

Her boldness was such that she was wont to sing two distiches of her own composition which meant:

It is a strange phenomenon that hens have occupied the place of the imperial cocks. Possibly the ignoble sky may dance in a fit of joy, as it has fallen to the lot of drummers to ply swords.[2]

Muhammad Shah seldom displayed his independent will. In the beginning of his reign he was under the complete dominance of the Sayyid Brothers. Later he was under the sway of Koki, Raushan-ud-daulah and Abdul Ghafur till 1732, of Khan-e-Dauran and his brother Muzaffar Khan from 1732 to 1739, and of Amir Khan and his three companions, Muhammad Ishaq, Asad Yar and Safdar Jang upto the time of his death in 1748.[3]

Ahmad Shah, 1748-1754

The next Emperor Ahmad Shah, the only son of Muhammad Shah, was 22 years old at the time of his accession. His mother Udham Bai, originally a dancing girl who possessed such charm and beauty that Muhammad Shah had raised her to the dignity of a queen. Even in the palace she never got rid of her loose character and several times fell under royal displeasure. Her intimacy with her personal servant Javid Khan had become a great scandal. The royal guards once staged a very interesting scene. They tied up a young ass and a bitch at the palace gate, on a day when a great durbar was to be held. When the nobles and other courtiers

[1]cf. Khushhal Chand, III. 16b.
[2]*Siyar*, II, 75.
[3]Khushhal Chand, III, 16b-28a; Sarkar, I, 16-7.

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came to attend the court, they audaciously urged them, saying, "First make your bow to these. This one (pointing to the ass) is the Nawab Bahadur (Javid Khan) and that (the bitch) is Hazrat Qudsia, the Queen mother."[1]

Ahmad Shah was a true son of his parents. He had been given no education and no training in the art of government. The sudden rise to unbridled power led him into a dissolute course of life. He fell into bad company, and wine and women became his ruling passion.[2]

Ahmad Shah was not a man of great intellect. All the period of his youth till manhood had been spent in the harem, and he had no experience whatever of the affairs of a kingdom, or of the cares of government. Besides, he was surrounded by all kinds of youthful pleasures, which every person seeing the turn of his mind was anxious to display before him to entice his fancy. As a natural consequence, he gave himself up entirely to pastime and sport, and bestowed no thoughts on the weighty affairs of the state.[3] He was dethroned, blinded and imprisoned by his Wazir, Imad-ul-Mulk, in 1754.

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Alamgir II, 1754-1759

Ahmad Shah's successor on the throne of Delhi was Alamgir II. He was 55 years old when he came to the throne. He had been leading a life of poverty, want and seclusion since the accession of Farrukh Siyar in 1713 when he was a lad of 14. The circumstances luckily did not allow him to fall into a course of vice, and he had spent over 40 years of his retired life in religious devotion and study of books, especially of history. He came to the throne with the determination to work as strenuously and carefully as his great-grandfather Aurangzeb, whose title he had imitated. But he singularly failed in his aims because of his failing health, weak character, incapacity for leadership and the overriding influence of his Wazir Imad-ul-Mulk.[4] He was murdered by his Wazir on November 29, 1759. An attempt was also made on the life of the Crown-Prince, Ali Gauhar, later known as Shah Alam II. He fled

[1]Shakir, 34-5. cf. Sarkar, I, 335-6.
[2]*Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi*, 34-5; Siyar, III, 27; *Bayan*, 174.
[3]*Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi* in Elliot, VIII, 112.
[4]Sarkar, II, 1-5.

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away from Delhi and remained a wandering refugee for about twelve years.

Weak character of the Delhi Wazirs

In countries where the king is absolute, and weak, incapable or imbecile, the interests of the people can only be conserved by the administration of a responsible prime minister. But the irony of fate seems to have worked its way even in this case also. For the wazirs of the later Mughals, though in many cases energetic and capable, were influenced by the evil example of their masters, or despairing of their trust, deliberately neglected the state affairs.

Munim Khan, 1707-1711

Munim Khan, the first prime minister of Bahadur Shah, attempted to patch up things in order to obtain temporary relief; but postponed radical measures to a later day instead of nipping the evil in the bud.[1] He died in February, 1711, and his master before he had appointed a successor, followed him to the grave in 1712.

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Zulfiqar Khan, 1711-1712

Jahandar Shah appointed Zulfiqar Khan his prime minister. This man, though a renowned soldier and statesman imitating his master's example, left the affairs of the state to a favourite, Raja Sobha Chand,[2] a sycophant.

Sayyid Abdullah, 1713-1720

Farrukh Siyar conferred this post on Sayyid Abdullah Khan, one of the famous Sayyid Brothers. His energy and ability availed him nothing and he gave himself to intrigue and the pursuit of pleasure, leaving the affairs of the Government to Diwan Ratan Chand.[3]

Muhammad Amin Khan, 1720-1721

The Sayyid Brothers were overthrown by Muhammad Shah, who appointed Muhammad Amin Khan the first minister of the realm in 1720. The new minister died after three months only.[4]

[1]Irvine, I, 126.
[2]ibid, 197, 257.
[3]ibid, 66; *Siyar*, II, 21.
[4]*Bayan*, 171.

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Nizam-ul-Mulk, 1721-1724

Nizam-ul-Mulk succeeded him. As the Emperor gave him no support, and even initiated conspiracies against him, the capable and clever wazir, finding that administrative vigour and honesty meant his own ruin, resigned in disgust in 1724.[1]

Qamar-ud-din Khan Itimad-ud-daulah, 1724-1748

He was the son of Muhammad Amin Khan, who held this office for nearly a quarter of a century (1724-48). He was an extremely indolent man, given to the enjoyment of sensual pleasures.[2] The master and his Wazir alike indulged in their selfish pursuits, not caring for the administration. The Wazir was given to bribery.[3]

A pen-picture by a contemporary historian will enable the reader to form an idea of the indifference to state affairs by both the Emperor and his prime minister. He says: "For some years past it has been the practice of the imperial court that whenever the officers of the Deccan or Gujarat and Malwa reported any Maratha incursion to the Emperor, His Majesty, in order to soothe his heart afflicted by such sad news, either visited the gardens to look at the newly planted and leafless trees, or rode out to hunt in the plains, while the grand wazir Itimad-ud-daulah Qamat-ud-din Khan went to assuage his feelings by gazing at the lotuses in some pools situated four leagues from Delhi, where he would spend a month or more in tents, enjoying pleasure or hunting fish in the rivers and deer in the plains. At such times Emperor and Wazir alike lived in total forgetfulness of the administration, the collection of the revenue, and the needs of the army. No chief, no man, thinks of guarding the realm and protecting the people, a while these disturbances daily grow greater."[4]

Safdar Jang, 1748-1752

Safdar Jang, the new Imperial Wazir, was Burhan-ul-Mulk Saadat Khan's sister's son and his son-in-law. He was the leader of the Irani party, and his sole aim was to break the power of the rival Turani party, which, for the past thirty years, had held the helm of affairs of the Mughal Empire. He kept round him and in

[1] *Bayan*, 172.
[2] *Maasir-ul-Umara*, I, 359; III, 720; *Siyar*, III, 9, 25.
[3] *Maasir-ul-Umara*, III, 720.
[4] *Mirat-e-Waridat*, 117-8 quoted in Sarkar, I, 12.

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the provinces the Shia recruits of the Irani Party, and by his selfish and one-sided policy hastened the fall of the Mughal Empire.

Javid Khan, formerly a slave, and paramour of Emperor's mother, became all-powerful at the royal court. He was the superintendent of the Privy Council, head of the intelligence department, and in charge of the imperial elephants, confirmation of grants and appointments, the Begam's estates and the Emperor's privy purse. He was then created a seven-hazari with the title of Nawab Bahadur.[1]

The hereditary court nobles revolted against the elevation of Javid Khan, and they became almost independent. Javid Khan had made it a matter of policy to oppose Safdar Jang tooth and nail. The Wazir in a fit of rage and exasperation resorted to the dagger, and put the eunuch to death on 27 August, 1752.[2] The Emperor and his mother were deeply grieved. "Udham Bai put on white robes and discarded her jewels and ornaments,"[3] after the manner of a widow. The Queen-Mother determined to wreak vengeance on Safdar Jang and entered into intrigues with Intizam-ud-daulah and Imad-ul-Mulk, the leaders of the Turani party, and the deadliest foes of Safdar Jang. Plots and counter-plots were hatched, and ultimately they succeeded in expelling Safdar Jang from chancellorship in March, 1753.

Intizam-ud-daulah, 1753-1754

Intizam-ud-daulah Khan-e-Khanan, the second Mir Bakhshi, became the prime minister. He was the eldest son of the late Wazir Qamar-ud-din Khan. This man was extremely ease-loving and indolent by temperament; but he was considered the head of the Turani party. He remained in office for 15 months (March, 1753 to May, 1754) and as expected his administration proved an utter failure.[4]

Imad-ul-Mulk, 1754-1761

The next wazir was Imad-ul-Mulk, who was the grandson of Asaf Jah Nizam-ul-Mulk. Born in June, 1737, he was only a lad when appointed; but he had already made a name for himself as a

[1]Sarkar, I, 337-8.
[2]*Delhi Chronicle*, 73.
[3]*Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi*, 41.
[4]ibid, 41; Sarkar, I, 442, 464, 543.

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great scholar in several branches of learning. He possessed active habits and lively spirit, and was a brave soldier. Being a man of intrigues and plots, he easily managed to oust Intizam-ud-daulah and seize the chancellorship for himself. His rule proved most disastrous to the declining Mughal Empire. His incapacity, selfishness and pride alienated the sympathy of all. "There has never been a wazir of Delhi whose rule was so barren of good result and so full of misery to himself and to the empire, to his friends and foes alike, as Imad-ul-Mulk's."[1] On May 3, 1755 he was dragged by his troops from the bathroom half covered only with a towel on foot through the streets and bazars of Panipat to a distance of 3.5 kilometres, constantly abusing and insulting and occasionally beating him. They made him sit on the bare ground in the burning sun for about two hours.[2] On August 11, 1757, Najib-ud-daulah who later remained the Dictator of the Mughal Empire from 1761 to 1770, plundered the mansion-house of Wazir Imad-ul-Mulk, and deliberately violated the chastity of all the women, young and old.[3]

Party factions at the Imperial Court

The process of enervation which had already set in was further accentuated by the mutual wrangles of the court nobles. Party factions had arisen in the Imperial court of Delhi immediately after the death of Aurangzeb; but they assumed a crystallised form during the reign of Farrukh Siyar. The Sayyid Brothers were at the helm of all state affairs, and the Emperor was merely a puppet in their hands. This he did not like, because he could not give free vent to his low desires and ambitions. Hence he gathered around him a company of friends who always opposed and intrigued against the Sayyids. Thus there came into existence two parties which were generally called the Emperor's friends and the Wazir's friends.

In the long reign of Muhammad Shah (1719-48), these party factions took a rather serious turn. They appeared in a more developed form, and the struggle between them became intensely acute. In consequence of so much incapacity on the part of the Emperor

[1]Sarkar, II, 6.

[2]*Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 48b-51a; *Tarikh-e-Muzaffari*, 109-10; *Siyar-ul-Mutakhirin*, III, 52; Sarkar, *Fall*, II, 45-6.

[3]*Delhi Chronicle*, dated 11.8.1757; *Najib-ud-daulah*, 13-14.

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and so much sloth and supineness on that of the Wazir, enmities rapidly sprang up. As a matter of fact it had become almost necessary for the nobles to form parties in order to secure advancement and in many cases even to maintain their existence. There were generally two parties. The Irani party represented Iranis of the Shia persuasion; while the Turani party comprised in the main Sunnis of the same Central Asian stock to which the Mughal Emperors belonged. The Iranis possessed superior intelligence and polished manners. They were well-versed in revenue affairs and in the administration of the civil departments and the secretariat. The Turks on the contrary, excelled in fighting capacity and power of commanding and controlling armies. The struggle between the two grew more acute each day; till matters came to such a pass that the rise of one meant the ruin of the other.[1]

Deterioration of the Mughal aristocracy

The deterioration in the character of the Mughal aristocracy was going apace with the general all-round degeneration of the Mughal character. The emperors and wazirs led a life of profligacy and inactivity, and their example was closely followed by the courtiers. From the death of Aurangzeb to the accession of Muhammed Shah (1707-19), within a period of 12 years, seven bloody wars of succession took place, which swept the ranks of a large number of princes, warlike nobles and renowned soldiers. The armed contest between rival nobles had caused further havoc in the destruction of noteworthy officers and soldiers. For instance the Nizam was able to confirm himself in the viceroyalty of the Deccan only after defeating three rivals. There took place three ruinous contests for the governorship of Gujarat in which many commanders of note, such as Shujaat Khan and Rustam Ali Khan perished. Constant dissensions at the court resulted in a steady deterioration in the character of the martial nobility which was further augmented by the risings of Rajputs, Jats, Marathas, Sikhs and Afghans.

Usurpation by the Mughal Viceroys

The inevitable result of such a state of things was that the respect and awe which the imperial name used to inspire in the hearts of men in power and office and even in the common folk had ceased

[1]Shaikh Chand, *Sauda*, 268-76; Ram Babu Saxena, *A History of Urdu Literature*, 64.

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to move them. Every one fancied himself of importance and entertained thoughts of shaking off constraint and of assuming independence.[1] As has already been mentioned, Nizam-ul-Mulk had retired to his own province in the Deccan where he declared his independence and laid the foundation of the dynasty of the Nizam in 1724 which lasted for two and a quarter centuries. In the same year Saadat Khan became Governor of Awadh and ruled in almost complete independence.

The Rohillas

The Rohillas, an Afghan clan, from Rohi region in Afghanistan, made themselves masters of a rich and fertile tract situated to the north of the Ganga, which came afterwards to be known as Rohilkhand.

The real founder of the Rohilla power was Ali Muhammad, from whom sprang the present line of the Nawabs of Rampur. Originally a Hindu Jat, who was taken prisoner when a young boy by Daud in one of his plundering expeditions, at village Bankauli in the parganah of Chaumahla, and was converted to Islam and adopted by him. On Daud's death in 1721, Ali Muhammad took charge of his father's retainers and obtained possession of his treasures. He then joined Azmatullah Khan, the imperial faujdar of Moradabad and with his connivance took advantage of the fast weakening power of the Delhi Emperors. He dispossessed local zamindars, seized Aonla and carved out for himself an independent principality in the present Bareilly district. Fearing retaliation by the Emperor, he won over Qamar-ud-din Khan and was through him confirmed in the lands of which he had possessed himself. His munificence attracted daring young men to him and he soon became a leader of note. He joined the imperial forces against Saif-ud-din Muhammad Khan, one of the Sayyids of Barah, who had rebelled. He so distinguished himself in the battle of Jansath that the Emperor conferred on him the title of Nawab. His fame drew many Afghans of repute such as Rahmat Khan, Dundi Khan and Payenda Khan to his service. During Nadir's invasion he gained immense booty and territory. After his death in 1748, Najib Khan rose to power.[2]

[1] cf. *Jauhar-e-Samsam* in Elliot, VIII, 73.

[2] *Maasir-ul-Umara*, II, 841-3; Shakir, 31; *Siyar*, II, 92 and III, 9-11; *Calcutta Review*, 1875, LXI, 202-4; Sarkar, I, 47-9.

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The Marathas

The Maratha power had been constantly rising in the Deccan for some years. They generally depended on the revenue from provinces belonging to other powers. The Marathas in those days directly administered only small districts while they raised contributions from other provinces governed by the Delhi Emperors or other chiefs. Since the Sayyid Brothers had, with the help of the Marathas, succeeded in installing Muhammad Shah on the imperial throne, the Emperor in 1720, confirming arrangements made by Sayyid Husain Ali, admitted the right of the Marathas to levy Chauth, or assessment of one-fourth of the land revenue, over the entire Deccan and permitted them to raise an additional tenth of the land revenue called Sardeshmukhi. They invaded Gujarat in 1726 in order to collect Chauth; and by 1732 had succeeded in partly occupying Gujarat, partitioning Bundelkhand and overrunning Malwa. In 1733 they swarmed over the country upto Agra. The next year they again plundered the provinces of Agra and Ajmer without any opposition from the Imperial Court. In 1737 the Marathas under their leader, Baji Rao, suddenly appeared at the very gates of Delhi, but did not attempt to occupy the imperial capital and soon returned to the Deccan, having pillaged and burnt its suburbs.[1]

Malwa was ceded to Balaji Rao Peshwa in 1741. In 1742 the Marathas captured Western Bengal, and started plundering Bihar and Bengal almost annually, until in 1746 Emperor Muhammad Shah made peace with them by promising Rs. 25 lakhs as the Chauth of Bengal and Rs. 10 lakhs as that of Bihar.[2] Orissa became a Maratha province in 1752, and thereafter the Marathas assumed the role of the chief power in India. Their assistance was often sought by the Emperors and their wazirs in maintaining their position, with the result that the politics of Delhi came to be dominated by them. In 1758 they entered the Panjab, and planted their banners at Lahore and Multan and northward upto Attock and Peshawar. But a year and a half later they were compelled to evacuate the Panjab by Ahmad Shah Durrani, who in 1761 inflicted upon them a crushing defeat in the third battle of Panipat.

[1]Irvine, II, 276 and 305; Khushhal Chand, III, 37b-43b; *Jauhar-e-Samsam* in Elliot, VIII, 73-4; *Siyar*, II, 79-80 and 90-1.

[2]Sarkar, I, 127.

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This blow for ever shattered their hope of conquering the Panjab.

The Jats of Bharatpur

These opportunities were not lost upon the Jats of the Agra Province. Following the usual course of successful rebels, they withheld remittances, plundered the people and built the famous fort of Bharatpur, which served as a storehouse for their booty and as the base of operations. They carried their plundering raids upto the very gates of the imperial cities of Agra and Delhi, making the roads in this territory unsafe, and hindering both trade and traffic. By 1738 they had securely established their power, which was considerably enhanced during the later period.

The first Jat chief of note was Churaman, who put himself at the head of a body of banditti and plundered the travellers passing between Delhi and the Deccan, and carried his depredations upto the suburbs of the second imperial capital of Agra. Reputed to be generous to his followers, he gathered about him a band of daring and enterprising youth, with the result that he became a terror to the country around. He became so powerful that in 1707 he plundered Muhammad Azam Shah, a son of Aurangzeb who had come there to contest the throne, of enormous booty. In 1710 he was present at the siege of Lohgarh against Banda. In 1713, in the war of succession between Farrukh Siyar and Jahandar Shah his succour was sought by Zulfiqar Khan, the prime minister to the latter. Farrukh Siyar was so much awed by him that he appointed him to the charge of the royal highway running from Delhi to the Chambal, thus legalising his robbery. The rapid rise of the Jat power aroused alarm and hatred in the heart of Raja Sawai Jai Singh of Jaipur. With the ready approval of the Emperor he led an expedition against Churaman and defeated him. His sons and followers became peaceful peasants; and thus perished all the work of Churaman.

His successor, Badan Singh, a man of remarkable ability and versatility attempted to rebuild the Jat fortunes from the very foundation in the face of insurmountable difficulties both within and without. By concealing his unbounded ambition under the cloak of humility, he won over Jai Singh and obtained from him the *tika*, the *nishan*, the *naqara*, the five-coloured flag and the title of Braja-raja. He now established himself as a Raja and built and equipped a number of forts. He bribed Wazir Qamar-ud-din Khan

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to silence all complaints made against him. He then systematically mulcted the whole country round about of all its riches. His successor, Surajmal, was the most powerful prince in Northern India in 1763.[1]

Weakening of the Imperial authority in the Panjab

For a long time the Mughal dynasty had by its wealth and brilliance inspired the people of the Panjab with awe. The marches of the great Mughals to their summer resorts in Kabul and Kashmir dazzled the minds of the inhabitants of this province. This impression of the greatness and glory of the house of Babar was further deepened by the great movements of huge armies across this province to carry on operations in the Khaibar Pass, at Kandhar or Kabul or beyond in Central Asia.

But the forces that were eating into the vitals of the Delhi government made no exception in the case of the Panjab. Petty chiefs, brigands and robbers began to raise their head on every side. Isa Khan Munj,[2] a Ranghar zamindar, had grown so powerful by successful highway robbery that Bahadur Shah raised him to the position of a mansabdar and Jahandar Shah made him a five-hazari and appointed him to the faujdari of Lakhi Jungle. These elevations emboldened him in his predatory excursions so much that he plundered and seized the neighbouring parganahs by dispossessing the local officials and zamindars. He also looted the caravans of Kabul and Kashmir when on their way to Delhi. He struck such terror into the hearts of men that even Abdus Samad Khan, the Viceroy-designate, could not proceed to Lahore without taking elaborate precautions against him.

Husain Khan Kheshgi, the head of the Afghan clans of Kasur, expelled the local Mughal officers and rose in open revolt.[3] Jang Panah Bhatti was a terror in the tract from Hasan Abdal to the Ravi. Jang Mir Mar, a zamindar of Auliapur near Lahore, used to waylay the merchants and travellers passing between the Ravi and the Satluj on their way to the provincial capital.[4] A similar state

[1]Father Francis Xavier Wendel's Orme MSS, pp. 44-55; *Imad-us-Saadat*, 55; *Asiatic Annual Register*, 1802, pp. 12-3; Khafi Khan, II, 668-9; Qanungo's *History of the Jats*, 35-76; Sarkar, II, 424-31; *Maasir-ul-Umara*, I, 540-8.

[2]Khafi Khan, II, 767-8; *Maasir-ul-Umara*, II, 712 and 825-8.

[3]Khafi Khan, II, 861-5; *Maasir-ul-Umara*, I, 604; *Siyar*, II, 47.

[4]*Maasir-ul-Umara*, II, 106.

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of lawlessness was in evidence in other parts of the province where adventurous and enterprising men were taking to the life of free-booters. The most notorious of such men were Tara Singh Randhawa of village Dharamkot in the Upper Bari Doab and Naurang zamindar of Sabzkot, near Zafarwal in Sialkot District. Besides individuals, the whole clans of Ranghars and Gujars of the eastern parts who were "predatory by instinct and tribal usage" were growing more and more refractory every day.[1]

Neglect of the frontier province of Afghanistan

The north-west frontier province of India constituted the only vulnerable point in the empire of the Mughals. On the strict control and good government of the province of Kabul, which had since the days of Akbar, formed the extreme boundary to the Indian Empire, depended the stability and prosperity of the government of Delhi. Unfortunately at this time, when the forces of disruption were let loose in several parts of the empire, the government of Kabul was in the hands of an indolent and negligent Governor, named Nasir Khan, who had held this post since 1720. The Governor spent his time in hunting and in prayers and neither he nor his master, the Emperor, took any interest in the management of the affairs of this most important frontier province.

The author of *Siyar-ul-Mutakhirin* gives an interesting picture of this carelessness. He says: "Neither the Subahdar, nor the Amir-ul-Umara (the Delhi Wazir) kept himself informed about the roads and passes of the country. No guards remained on the roads. Owing to the weakness of the Government, the local officers lost all fear of being called to account. None cared for any one else, none sought instructions from any (high officer). Everywhere everyone did whatever he liked. Any one who wished could come and go (through the frontier roads); the Emperor and his nobles never heard of it. Neither the Emperor nor the Wazir ever enquired why no newsletter was coming to the court from any province or outpost."[2]

The revenues of Afghanistan fell far short of the expenses incurred by the Government there, and the deficit used formerly to be made up by an annual allowance from the revenues of the Central Government; but no such monetary help had now been given for

[1] cf. Sohan Lal, I, 103; Ali-ud-din, 95a-b; Sarkar, I, 185.
[2] *Siyar*, II, 93.

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many years past. Consequently, Nasir Khan's army had been in arrears for five years (1733-38) and the soldiers poorly fed, poorly armed and poorly equipped clamoured for even one year's dues in order to pay their creditors; but no attention was ever paid to the repeated applications of the Governor. The agent of the Governor of Kabul several times described the sad situation in Afghanistan; but he was given this answer by the Delhi Wazir: "Do you think I am a petty simpleton that I shall be impressed by such a tale as yours? Our houses are built on the plains; we do not fear anything except what we can see with our own eyes. Your houses stand on lofty hills, and therefore you have probably sighted Mongol and Qizilbash armies from the roofs of your houses. Reply to your master that we are writing for money to the governor of Bengal and when the Bengal revenue arrives after the rainy season the money due will be quickly sent to Kabul."[1]

The foreign invasions

In 1839 Nadir Shah annexed trans-Indus territories of the Mughal Empire consisting of Afghanistan, Baluchistan, North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Chahar Mahal or the four districts of Aurangabad (Jehlam), Gujrat, Sialkot and Pasrur.

On his death in June 1747, his general, Ahmad Abdali, seized these territories, and laid the foundation of his independent Durrani kingdom. The Abdali invaded India eight times. In his first invasion, 1747-48, he was defeated by the Delhi armies. His second invasion, 1749-50, resulted in acquiring Chahar Mahal. During his third invasion, 1751-52, he conquered Panjab and Kashmir. In 1756-57, he plundered Delhi, Agra and the Jat country, and annexed Sarhind province. The Marathas were crushed during 1759-61. The heaviest blow was struck at the Sikhs in 1762. In his next two invasions, 1764-65 and 1766-67 the Sikhs successfully opposed him. His last three attempts saw him confined to Peshawar. He died on April 14, 1772, and on this very day the Sikhs plundered Peshawar.

[1]Anand Ram, 11-2; Irvine, II, 324-5.

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CHAPTER 2

Political State of India in 1764

General condition

It seems proper to take a cursory view of the political state of India in 1764. At that time India was in a state of disintegration and decay. The central government had collapsed and whatever of it remained was paralysed. Most of its provinces had become independent, and in many instances this independence further extended to districts and even to towns. Every man was in a way a law unto himself. The destruction wrought by fire and sword was visible everywhere, particularly in Northern India. The flames of burning homesteads and fields and the reek of innocent blood were ever rising. We are told by the eye-witness James Skinner, a soldier of fortune of the time, that "so reduced was the actual number of human beings, and so utterly cowed their spirits, that the few villages that did continue to exist, at great intervals, had scarcely any communication with each other; and so great was the increase of beasts of prey that the little communication that remained was often cut off by a single tiger known to haunt the roads."[1]

The Durrani Kingdom

Starting from the north we find that Ahmad Shah Durrani, the founder of the Durrani Kingdom, in India held Kashmir, the territories to the west of the Indus, Bahawalpur, Multan and Sind. Though Ahmad Shah had succeeded in depriving the Marathas of their succession to the Mughal Empire by his grand victory at Panipat; yet owing to the disorganization and poor financial resources of his loosely-knit empire, he could not drive any benefit from it. Hence he, his son and grandson, remained content by

[1] Keene's *Hindustan under Free Lances*, pp. 400-1.

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making a few more destructive campaigns; which did nothing more than accentuate the anarchy already prevailing in this country.

The Sikhs

The Sikhs were supreme in the Punjab, including Sarhind province lying between the Satluj and the Jamuna to the close vicinity of Delhi. A Swiss officer Antoine Louis Henri Polier who was then living in Delhi wrote in May 1776:

"Five hundred of Najaf Khan's (Prime Minister of the Mughal Empire) horse dare not encounter fifty Sikh horsemen."[1]

About the Sikhs of this period Sir Jadunath Sarkar writes:

"There was a new factor which made itself increasingly felt in North Indian politics from 1763 onwards and came to dominate the entire country north and west of Delhi from the Indus to the Ganges throughout the Great Anarchy which was ended only by the British conquest of the early Nineteenth century."[2]

The Mughal Empire

The Mughal Empire had been for many years past shrinking into itself, till it was reduced to the narrow limits of an insignificant province. It was bounded on the north and north-west by the Sikh territory. To the north-east was the tract of land controlled by the Rohillas. To the east were the dominions of the Nawab of Awadh. The country of the Jats of Bharatpur was to its south; while in the west were the territories of the Rajput princes. Most of these powers acknowledged the king's title and addressed him accordingly; but tendered him no more obedience and gave him no support. On the contrary they wanted to see him reduced to extremities.

The Emperor

Shah Alam II, the Mughal Emperor of Delhi, was at Allahabad. He was trying to return to Delhi with the assistance of the English whom he had granted the *Diwani* of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa; but the English were not yet prepared to escort him to the imperial capital. Alexander Dow, an English Officer, who enjoyed the Emperor's intimacy at that time, wrote about him thus:

[1]*The Asiatic Annual Register*, 1800, pp. 32, 34.
[2]*Fall of the Mughal Empire*, III, 101 (1964 edition).

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"Shaw Allum is robust in his person about six feet high. His complexion is rather darker than that which was common to the race of Timur, and his countenance is expressive of that melancholy which naturally arose from his many misfortunes. He possesses personal courage, but it is of the passive kind, and may be rather called fortitude to bear adversity, than that daring boldness which loves to face danger. He has been so often dismounted in the course of ambition, that he now fears to give it the rein; and seems less desirous to make any efforts to retrieve the power of his family, than to live quietly under the shadow of its eclipsed majesty. His clemency borders upon weakness, and his good nature has totally subverted his authority. He is daily induced, by importunity, to issue out orders which he takes no means to enforce, and which he is certain, will not be obeyed. From this blemish in the character of Shaw Allum arose the half of his misfortunes; for the great secret of establishing authority is to give no orders which cannot be enforced, and rather to suffer small injuries, than show resentment, without the power of punishing.

"His generosity is more than equal to his abilities, and, too often, ill bestowed. He is too much addicted to women and takes more pains to maintain his *Haram* than to support an army. But, though we cannot call him a great prince. we must allow him to be a good man. His virtues are many; but they are those of private life, which never appear with lustre upon a throne. His judgment is by no means weak; but his passions are not strong: the easiness of his temper is therefore moulded like wax by every hand; and he always gives up his own better opinion for those of men of inferior parts. He is affable in his conversation, but seldom descends to pleasantry. Upon the whole, though Shaw Allum is by no means qualified to restore a lost empire, he might have maintained it with dignity in prosperous times, and transmitted his name, as a virtuous prince, to posterity. It is with great regret that the author, from his regard to truth, cannot speak more favourably of a prince, to whom his gratitude and attachment are due, for repeated testimonies of his esteem and friendship."[1]

About his courtiers and resources he says: "He keeps the poor resemblance of a court at Allahabad, where a few ruined *Omrahs*, in hope of better days to their prince having expended their fortunes

[1]Alexander Dow, II, Appendix, pp. 90-1.

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in his service, still exist the ragged pensioners of his poverty, and burthen his gratitude with their presence. The districts of Korah and Allahabad, in the King's possession, are rated at thirty *lacks*, which is one-half more than they are able to bear. Instead of gaining by this bad policy, that prince unfortunate in many respects, has the mortification to see his poor subjects oppressed by those who farm the revenue, while he himself is obliged to compound with the farmers for half the stipulated sum."[1]

The Emperor returned to his capital escorted by Mahadji Sindhia on the 6th January, 1772. Without any power and wealth he had a mere semblance of authority. He made no attempt to regain his lost prestige; but kept himself sunk in sloth and sensuality. Qudratullah, the author of *Jam-e-Jahan Numa*, writes: "Shah Alam sits in the palace of Delhi, and has no thought beyond the gratification of his own pleasure, while his people are deeply sorrowful and grievously oppressed even unto death."[2]

His fortune, however, flared up only for a while under the leadership of Najaf Khan; but its dying flicker was extinguished in blood and fire by the horrible atrocities of Ghulam Qadir in 1788. Sindhia's efforts in restoring the prestige of the Great Mughal availed him nothing, and thus the Empire met its doom soon after.

The Delhi Empire under Shah Alam II was reduced to such a wretched state that by the end of the period treated of in these pages, the Emperor could secure not more than Rs. 17,000 monthly to support himself, the royal family, dependants and establishment, which per head "did not exceed 15 rupees per month (£21 per annum.)"[3]

Not to speak of the provinces of the empire, even the city of Delhi where the Emperor resided was not completely under the control of Shah Alam. "It was a period," says Sir Jadunath Sarkar, "marked by frequent bloody fights between rival nobles claiming the supreme control over the state, street brawls by soldiers mutinying for arrears of pay, between soldiers of different races who had quarrelled in the bazaar. The Emperor was timid and imbecile, defeating the efforts of his best friends by listening

[1]Alexander Dow, II, Appendix, pp. 89-90.
[2]Elliot, VIII, 185; *The Asiatic Annual Register*, 1800, p. 33.
[3]Hamilton, I, p. 417.

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to base flatterers and corrupt ministers of his pleasure, and vainly trying to recover his power by means of low and cowardly intrigue, such as creating a new wazir for an old one or setting up his commander-in-chief (*bakhshi*) against his chancellor (wazir) in the control of the imperial court and the nominal army of the Empire."[1]

The extent of his kingdom is epitomized in a Persian proverb:
Badshah Shah Alam, Az Delhi ta Palam
[Emperor Shah Alam (rules over territory) from Delhi to Palam.] (a distance of about 25 kms).

The Imperial Capital

Delhi, the imperial capital, was under the control of Najib-ud-daulah, the plenipotentiary of Ahmad Shah Abdali. Shah Alam's step-mother, Zinat Mahal, and his son Prince Jawan Bakht lived there. Najib gave them full protection. Little did he know that his own grandson, Ghulam Qadir, would perpetrate unspeakable horrors on the royal family 18 years after his death. The glory and grandeur of the capital had disappeared by this time. Its magnificence and opulence had given place to poverty and penury. Describing the imperial palace Major Polier wrote on the 22nd May, 1776: "Wood and some coarse *Curuah* cloth, has supplied the want of those pillars of silver and gold that formerly supported awnings of cloth or velvet, covered with embroidery which went round every apartment. The ceilings, of massy silver gilt, have made room for more modest ones of painted wood. In short, every step one takes in the palace, shews what it was once, and how fallen it is at present. Even the very walls have not escaped the depredations of mischievous avarice. They are of fine white marble in most of the public apartments I have seen, and inlaid with agates, jaspers, onyxes, and other precious marbles, in the form of flowers, after the Florentine manner. This work has been extremely well performed, and at a great expense, but almost everywhere the marble has been dug for the small pieces of agates, or cornelians, with which it was inlaid. It hurts me to see such beautiful work gone to ruin; but I cannot turn anywhere without seeing the same waste and desolation.

[1] *Indian Historical Records Commission*, III, 1921, p. 4.

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"I have not far to go, to see a striking instance of this fickleness of Fortune. I am lodged in a house built by the famous Camurodin Khan, vizier to Mahomed Shah, a man immensely rich and powerful. The house, though much decayed, still shews what it was, and the opulence of its master. It is certain a good estate might be bought for only what has been expended on the gilding, from which you may judge of the rest. In the time of Camurodin Khan, the greatest *Omrah* of the empire would have thought himself highly honoured by being admitted to an entertainment or visit in this palace; and as for an European, as I am, the farthest I could have pretended to go, would have been about the gate. But see, how times alter! The only surviving son of this great vizier is in the deepest want of everything, inhabits a wretched dwelling on the outside of this house, which, in the time of his father, one of his servants would have disdained to live in; and an European occupies the vizier's apartments. This is one of those revolutions that are much more frequently met within this country than in any other, and is a fine subject for moral and philosophical reflection. Notwithstanding what I have said, of my occupying the master's apartments of Camurodin Khan's house, yet I must also confess I have no reason to assume much on it, for I am not the only inhabitant. A good quantity of bats, owls, swallows, and pigeons, dispute with me that honour, and, inspite of my efforts, keep possession of their holes; so that, altogether, I have nothing to be proud of, since I only share the habitation with them."[1]

While describing Delhi during the years, 1749–1788, Sir Jadunath Sarkar writes: "Delhi history during these forty years is a sickening and monotonous tale of sack by Afghans and Marathas, Sikhs and Jats, even Gujars and Pindaris; frequent panic among the citizens whenever any such attack was expected, the flight of the rich, the closing of the shops, the looting of the unprotected houses by the ruffians of the city population who took advantage of the public alarm and confusion; the utter spoliation of the peasantry and ruin of the surrounding villages by organized bands of brigands or soldiers out foraging, and consequent famine prices in the capital; the incurable intrigue, inefficiency and moral decay of the imperial court, culminating in the crowning agony

[1] *The Asiatic Annual Register*, 1800, pp. 29-30.

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of Ghulam Qadir's capture of the palace, outrage on the Emperor's family and blinding of Shah Alam II himself. The peasantry were so exasperated by the sufferings and the failure of the state to protect their life and property that they naturally regarded all strangers and even the forces of the Crown as their enemies."[1]

The Marathas

The Maratha confederacy, once the terror of the whole country, was broken up in 1761 at the third battle of Panipat. Three of its members—Sindhia of Gwalior, Gaekwar of Baroda, and Holkar of Indore—still owed nominal allegiance to Peshwa; while the Bhonsle of Nagpur had openly declared his independence, and ruled over most of the territories, now comprising the Madhya Pradesh and Orissa.

The Peshwa was still trying to recover his influence in Northern India, and for this purpose Madho Rao Peshwa despatched in 1769 his three lieutenants, Ram Chandra Ganesh, Mahadji Sindhia, and Tukoji Holkar. They first settled the affairs in Malwa, and afterwards dispersed in different directions. Ram Chandra went to Bundelkhand, Sindhia to Udaipur, and Holkar to Kotah and Bundi. Having realized tribute in these places, they opened communications with the Mughal Emperor, the Nawab of Awadh, and Najib-ud-daulah, the Dictator of Delhi.

The Marathas still appeared supreme; but as a matter of fact they had lost their vigour, though their weakness was not yet discernible. After the death of Madho Rao Peshwa in 1772 the competing claims to the office of the Peshwa, and keen rivalries among the chief confederates, broke up their unity. Still they were kept together in a loose confederacy by the great Nana Fadnis. On his death in 1800, they were easily divided, and then defeated by Wellesley.

The Jats

The Jats had carved out a small kingdom for themselves in the close neighbourhood of Delhi. Their territory lay between Agra and Jaipur, touching in the east the boundary of Etawah district and in the north the vicinity of Delhi. Their capital was at Bharatpur, a fortress long considered impregnable. They had a

[1] *Indian Historical Records Commission*, III, 1921, pp. 4-5.

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revenue of two million sterling, and an army of sixty thousand men. Surajmal was killed in a battle with Najib-ud-daulah at Delhi on December 25, 1763. His son and successor, Jawahir Singh, waged a retaliatory war against Najib. He was deceived by his allies, Imad-ul-Mulk and Malhar Rao Holkar, while the Sikhs deserted him in the middle of the campaign, Jawahir Singh died in June, 1768.

The position of the Jats about this time was on the whole quite strong. "No enemy was then in sight; the spirited Rajah of Jaipur had died a few months before Jawahir; the Marathas were too deeply involved in their own country to send any expedition to Hindustan, and even their local agents in Bundelkhand and North Malwa were hard put to it to hold their own. Delhi was a lordless city, the Emperor being a powerless pensioner of the English at Allahabad; Najib-ud-daulah was now a broken-down invalid who had retired from active life to wait for his latter end in resignation. While the Jat Rajah was thus at peace with his neighbours, the rebels and refractory vassals within his territory were promptly crushed by his European generals, Sombre and Madec. The treasury was fairly full."[1] Under these circumstances the Jats could have enjoyed a long spell of prosperity and progress. But the Jat rulers possessed no capacity or tact. "Brain and character alike were wanting among the successors of Jawahir Singh."[2]

The Rajputs

To the south-west of the Jats lay the country of Madho Singh, the Raja of Jaipur. His revenues were estimated at eighty lakhs, which was not much. The soil being rocky and sandy was ill-cultivated. He could raise an army of forty thousand men.

Bordering upon the territories of Jaipur was Marwar, then under Bijai Singh. It was an extensive State. In the most prosperous days its revenues amounted to five crores; but they had now declined by half.

The next Rajput State of some importance was Udaipur. It had been considerably reduced in revenues. Its army numbered fifteen thousands.

In addition to these, there were the minor princes of Kotah,

[1]Sarkar, III, 2.
[2]ibid, 4.

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Bundi, Rupnagar, Jaisalmer and Bikaner, each of whom could collect six to eight thousand men.

Most of these States were under Maratha domination; and they were looking out for an opportunity to throw off their yoke.

The Rohillas

The Rohillas were Afghans who had commenced rising to power nearly fifty years before. Their territory was situated between Delhi and the Himalayas with Bareilly as their capital. There were several independent chieftains, the most notable of whom were Najib-ud-daulah, Hafiz Rahmat Khan and Ahmad Khan Bangash. Najib's dominions extended from Saharanpur all along the Jamuna as far as Delhi, and to the north of the Ganga touching the frontiers of Hafiz Rahmat Khan. The Hafiz's territory touched the dominions of Shuja-ud-daulah and lay mostly along the northern bank of the Ganga with the exception of some *parganahs* on the Jamuna. The country of Ahmad Khan Bangash was chiefly situated in the Ganga Doab and bordered on the district of Korah. His capital was at Farrukhabad.

The Rohillas could raise an army of 100,000 horse and 100,000 foot; but their forces were wretchedly equipped and poorly paid, and so they were an object of ridicule rather than of terror to their enemies. "The Rohillas," wrote Alexander Dow in 1768, "are remarkable for nothing more than their natural antipathy to the Mahrattors, which might be turned to advantage by the British in their future views upon Hindustan."[1]

Ahmad Shah Abdali appointed Najib-ud-daulah Mir Bakhshi in 1757 and Dictator of the Mughal Empire in January 1761. He died in 1770. The Rohilla territory in the Ganga Doab was seized by the Marathas the same year. Najib's son and successor, Zabitah Khan, displayed no strength of character. He was defeated by the Marathas in 1771. Three years later the Rohillas to the north of the Ganga were defeated by the Nawab of Awadh with British assistance, and most of their territory was occupied by him. Zabitah Khan's power was crushed by the Mughal Emperor in 1777, and he was compelled to seek shelter with the Sikhs whose religion he embraced under the name of Dharam Singh. He was, however, successful in regaining some of his power, and died in 1785. He

[1]Dow, II, Appendix, 84.

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was succeeded by his son Ghulam Qadir. Three years later he not only deposed Shah Alam but also tortured and blinded him. The princes and princesses were flogged, made to dance, and the latter outraged. He was soon after caught and killed by Sindhia. The Rohilla power thus came almost to an inglorious end.

The Nawab of Awadh

The dominions of Shuja-ud-daulah, the Nawab of Awadh, were situated to the north-east of the Ganga. In the south they bordered upon Bihar divided by the river Gogra, and on the north they were bounded by mountains. His revenues amounted nearly to two crores, out of which he paid nothing to the Emperor, though he owed allegiance to him. The Nawab was an ally of the English who considered his territory as a friendly buffer state between the British dominions and the North-West.

It will, perhaps, be not out of place here to delineate the character of Shuja-ud-daulah, as observed by a contemporary:

"Suja ul Dowlat is extremely handsome in his person about five feet eleven inches in height, and so nervous and strong, that, with one stroke of the sabre he can cut off the head of a buffalo. He is active, passionate, ambitious, his penetrating eye seems, at first sight, to promise uncommon acuteness and fire of mind: but his genius is too volatile for depth of thought; and he is consequently more fit for the manly exercises of the field, than for deliberation in the closet. Till of late he gave little attention to business. He was up before the sun, mounted his horse, rushed into the forest, and hunted down tigers or deer till the noon of day. He then returned, plunged into the cold bath, and spent his afternoons in the *Haram* among his women. Such was the bias of Suja ul Dowlat's mind till the late war. Ambitious without true policy, and intoxicated with the passions of youth, he began a wild career, in which he was soon checked. Stung with the loss of reputation, his passions have taken another course. His activity is employed in disciplining his army, and he now spends more time at the comptoir of his finances, than in dallying with the ladies of his seraglio. His authority, therefore, is established, his revenues increased and his army on a respectable footing. But, with all his splendid qualities, he is cruel, treacherous, unprincipled, deceitful: carrying a specious appearance, purposely to betray, and when he embraces with one hand, will stab with the other to the heart. Together

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with being heir to the fruits of his father's crimes he inherits all his latent baseness not one virtue more than Seifdar Jung."[1]

Shuja-ud-daulah died in January, 1775, and was succeeded by weaklings, during whose reign the British influence grew greater every day and consequently Awadh occupied more or less the position of a British dependency.

The Nizam of Haidarabad

The Nizam of Haidarabad who ruled over the whole of Golconda province possessed an army from sixty to seventy thousand men; but this was ill-disciplined and poorly paid. He was always in fear of the Marathas and Haidar Ali of Mysore, and consequently he became almost a permanent ally of the English.

The Karnataka

Muhammad Ali, the Nawab of the Karnataka, was extremely extravagant. He borrowed money from the English merchants, and delivered up to his creditors the revenues of his territories. "We support Mahommed Ali," wrote Alexander Dow in 1768, "as nominal *nabob* of the Carnatic, while, in fact, we govern the country without control, having the possession of the garrisons and the disposal of the revenues."[2]

Mysore

Haidar Ali, the strong and sturdy ruler of Mysore was anxious to extend his dominions. He "is said to have thirty disciplined battalions of sepoys, twenty thousand good horse and a great train of artillery, wrought by five hundred European renegadoes. This prince having served in person in European armies, models his troops upon their plan, pays punctually, and enforces discipline with rigor. Together with being an able politician, he is a daring, active, and impetuous soldier and if he is not immediately crushed, he may prove the most dangerous enemy that the British have hitherto met with in the East. He is at present, the most formidable prince in all India, and he will, no doubt, take advantage of the divided state of that country, and endeavor to extend his conquests."[3]

[1]Alexander Dow, II, Appendix, 92.
[2]ibid, 93.
[3]ibid, 94.

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Hostilities broke out between Mysore and the English, and the house of Haidar Ali was destroyed in 1799.

The English

The English in the east were steadily rising to power. They had obtained from the Mughal Emperor the *Diwani* of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, and virtually ruled over these provinces.[1] The revenues from here amounted in 1776 to Rs. 33,025,968 and the net balance in favour of the Company after paying all expenses and tribute, etc. was Rs. 10,575,968 (£ 1,321,994—15*s*.). The British forces in Bengal consisted of three battalions of Europeans and thirty of Indian sepoys, well-equipped, properly armed and disciplined.[2]

The English had also acquired the Northern Circars; while the Nawab of Karnataka was their creature. Besides, they possessed many factories on the coast. Their garrisons at Chunar and Allahabad had considerably raised their prestige and given them control over the eastern borders of the Maratha country. Their troops commanded by an English general were stationed in Awadh where their influence was slowly growing. They were negotiating with many other Indian princes, and their diplomacy was creating disunion everywhere, thereby paving the way for themselves.

This chaotic state then prevailing in India offered the most productive field to the English owing to their superior diplomacy and power of organization. Alexander Dow was not much wrong in this forecast. He wrote in 1768:

"It is apparent, however, from what has been said, that the immense regions of Hindustan might be all reduced by a handful of regular troops. Ten thousand European infantry, together with the sepoys in the Company's service, are not only sufficient to conquer all India, but, with proper policy, to maintain it for ages, as an appendage of the British Crown."

He then lays down the policy to achieve this end: "In a country like India, where all religions are tolerated, the people can have no objection to the British on account of theirs. The army

[1] "The provinces of Bengal and Behar are possessed by the British East India Company, in reality by the right of arms, though in appearance, by a grant from the present emperor." ibid, 93.

[2] Alexander Dow considered this strength superior to that of any other Indian power in fighting capacity: "We are much superior, even upon that establishment, to any other power at present in Hindustan" ibid.

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might be composed of an equal number of Mahommedans and Hindoos, who would be a check upon one another, while a small body of Europeans would be a sufficient check upon both. The battalions ought to be commanded altogether by European officers."

"At present, the black officers of the sepoys must rise from the ranks. This is sound policy, and ought to be continued. Men of family and influence are deterred, by this circumstance, from entering into the service. These officers are, therefore, entirely our creatures, and will never desert a people, among whom alone they can have any power; for no acquired discipline will give weight to a mean man, sufficient to bring to the field an army of Indians."[1]

Lack of unity and purpose

Thus we find that India during this period was parcelled out into a number of autonomous provinces. Each led a life of completely selfish isolation, and nobody thought of the country as a whole. The people kept themselves busy in plundering and devastating the country of their neighbours as remorselessly as the foreigners. There was no common army and treasury for all India to repel the foreign invader and to maintain internal peace. Even in provinces there was no personal bond between the ruler and the ruled. The cultivator and the trader had neither protection against an outside enemy nor security from voracious officials who deprived them of their last paisa in order to gratify their greedy masters. The remarks of the French adventurer, Jean Law, made to Sayyid Ghulam Husain, the author of *Siyar-ul-Mutakhirin*, applied to the whole country. "So far as I can see," said he, "there is nothing that you could call Government between Patna and Delhi."

Another contemporary English officer made the following observations about the lack of unity and purpose in political India: "The country was torn to pieces by civil wars, and groaned under every species of domestic confusion. Villainy was practised in every form; all law and religion were trodden under foot, the bonds of private friendship and connection, as well as of society and government, were broken; and every individual, as if amidst a forest of wild beasts, could rely upon nothing but the strength of his own arm."[2]

[1]Alexandar Dow, II, Appendix, 94-6.

[2]*Marathi Riyasat*, IV, 189-220; *C.P.C.*, III, xxii-iii; *Indian Historical Records Commission*, III, 4-9; Dow, II, Appendix, 79-94; *The Asiatic Annual Register*, 1800, pp. 29-34.

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CHAPTER 3

Position of the Sikhs in 1764

Disunity and discord

The political picture of the Panjab in 1764 was not very much different from that of the rest of India. By this time the indefatigable Ahmad Shah Abdali was about to retire from Hindustan leaving the Sikhs in undisputed possession of the land of the five rivers. In the absence of common enemy and common danger the self-seeking instinct of individual chiefs asserted itself. A *Sardar* began to attack another *Sardar* and aggrandize himself at the expense of his co-religionists.

The chief obstacle to their advance therefore was their lack of unity. There was no central political body to maintain discipline. The Sikh organization based on a perfect democratic form did not encourage the evolution of a well laid-out central policy. The country was occupied by numerous chiefs, great and small; and nothing would induce them to combine for concerted action. Each was intensely jealous of the other, and internecine warfare had become the order of the day. The national character of the Sikhs had greatly degenerated at this time. They had forgotten the exalted teachings of the Gurus, and they became a gang of robbers whose only law was the sword.

It was indeed a sad sight to see the brave sons of the Khalsa brotherhood who had shown themselves so great in adversity lacking the firmness to remain so in times of prosperity.[1]

[1]It will not be out of place to quote here only one Panjabi proverb out of many which tell us that the Jats, a vast majority of whom formed the ranks of the Khalsa found it difficult to keep themselves under control in days of good fortune.

Jat, bhainsā, bakrā chauthi bidhwa nār,
yeh chāron bhuke bhale, Rjje karen bakār.

[A Jat, a bull, a he-goat, and fourthly a widow, are good, if they have an empty stomach, and bad if a full one.] cf. *Panjab States Gazetteers*, XVII, A, 65.

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Lust for power

The Sikhs, once needy adventurers, had now become lords of the domains. They loved power which, when achieved, merely whetted their appetite for more power. The lust for power naturally led to corruption; discords and dissensions commeneed owing to conflicts of temper, ambition and avarice.

The co-parcenary[1] system of villages caused interminable broils and bickerings among the Sikhs. The disputes and divisions within a domain gave opportunity for an outsider to intervene. In course of time he would eject both and appropriate to himself their lands. Whenever there was a contest about the boundary or a personal injury, the chief would call upon his relatives and retainers to seek revenge. In this way a blood-feud would begin and continue from generation to generation. In case of strife within the *msil*, each party was at liberty to fortify with outside aid. On such occasions each horseman received one rupee a day as remuneration; while some men served without pay, expecting plunder as their reward. The owner of a village therefore defended his possessions by a wall and a ditch. The towns in joint property had a fort occupied by the owners; but their shares were divided and protected by an inner retrenchment by way of precaution against treachery of the fellow occupant.[2]

Sir John Malcolm in his *Sketch of the Sikhs* says:

"Intoxicated with their success, they have given way to all those passions which assail the minds of men in the possession of power. The desire, which every petty chief entertained, of increasing his territories, of building strong forts, and adding to the numbers of his troops, involved them in internal wars, and these, however commenced, soon communicated to members who engaged in this dispute as passion or interest dictated. Though such feuds have, no doubt, helped to maintain their military spirit, yet their extent

[1]The Sikh conquests were originally made by confederated bands. Every village was proportionally shared according to the number of horsemen present. One village therefore could be divided into a hundred horse shares, another into a thousand; while others were held entirely by a single chief. An individual free Sikh horseman fighting on his own account was entitled to his horse share. The chiefs divided according to the number of their retainers; and their own portion was increased by the fixed Sardari allotment.

[2]*History of the Punjab*, I, 230-32; *Report on the settlement of the per gannahs formerly comprised in the Thanesur District* by H. M. Lawrence, 1843, p. 12.

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and virulence have completely broken down that union which their legislator, Govind, laboured to establish. Quarrels have been transmitted from father to son: and in a country where the infant is devoted to steel and taught to consider war as his only occupation, these could not but multiply in an extraordinary degree: and, independent of the comparative large conquests in which the greater chiefs occasionally engaged, every village has become an object of dispute; and there are few, if any, in the Punjab, the rule of which is not contested between brothers or near relations. In such a state, it is obvious, the Sikhs could alone be formidable to the most weak and distracted governments."[1]

The spirit of independence

The principles of democracy were maintained in Sikhism to a degree amounting almost to perfection. No distinctions of titles, etc., existed. Even the highest chief received only that much attention from his subordinates which was hardly sufficient to effect obedience in the discharge of his military and political duties. Such was the spirit of independence that a Sikh soldier of the lowest position considered himself equal to a chief of the highest rank. Forster supplies an example of this kind of disposition. In February, 1783 he recorded: "In travelling through the Siringnaghur country [Gaṛhwāl], our party was joined by a Sicque horseman, and being desirous of procuring his acquaintance, I studiously offered him the various attentions which men observe to those they court. But the Sicque received my advances with a fixed reserve and disdain, giving me, however, no individual cause of offence; for his deportment to the other passengers was not less contemptuous. His answer, when I asked him the name of his chief, was wholly conformable to the observations I had made of his nation. He told me (in a tone of voice, and with an expression of countenance, which seemed to revolt at the idea of servitude) that he disdained an earthly superior, and acknowledged no other master than his prophet."[2]

This resulted in mutual rivalry and jealousy and personal selfishness. "From the spirit of independence so invariably infused amongst them, their mutual jealousy, and rapacious roving temper,

[1]Malcolm, 103-5.
[2]Foster, 329-30.

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THE CIS-SATLUJ TERRITORY OF THE SIKHS



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the Sicques at this day are seldom seen co-operating in the national concert, but actuated by the influence of an individual ambition, or private distrust, they pursue such plans only as coincide with these motives."[1]

About twelve years later Imam-ud-din, the author of *Husain Shahi*, who travelled through the Panjab, makes a similar observation:

"In the country of the Panjab from the Indus to the banks of the Jamuna there are thousands of chiefs in the Sikh community. None obeys the other. If a person owns two or three horses he boasts of being a chief, and gets ready to fight against thousands. When a village is besieged by the Sikhs to realize tribute which the *zamindars* cannot afford, they intrigue with other Sikhs; and the Sikhs begin to fight between themselves. Whoever wins receives money according to the capacity of the villagers."[2]

The Sikh Sardars

A lively picture of the Sikh *Sardars* of these days is reproduced here from a letter of a shrewd and careful Swiss officer, Major Polier, written to Colonel Ironside at Bilgram on the 22nd May, 1776 from Delhi:

"As for the Seiks, that formidable aristocratical republic, I may safely say, it is only so to a weak defenceless state, such as this is. It is properly the snake with many heads. Each *zemindar*, who from the Attock to Hansey, Issar (Hissar), and to the gates of Delhi, lets his beard grow, cries *Wah Gorow*, eats pork, wears an iron bracelet, drinks *bang*, abominates the smoking of tobacco, and can command from ten followers on horseback to upwards, sets up immediately for a Seik *Sirdar*: and as far as in his power, aggrandizes himself at the expense of his weaker neighbours; if Hindu or Mussulman, so much the better; if not, even amongst his own fraternity will he seek to extend his influence and power; only with this difference, in their intestine divisions, from what is seen everywhere else, that the husbandman and labourer, in their own districts, are perfectly safe and unmolested let what will happen round about them.

"To say the truth, they are indefatigable; mounted on the best

[1] ibid, 335-36.
[2] *Husain Shahi*, 242-3; *Haqiqat*, 39; *Tarikh-e-Ahmad*, 43

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horses that India can afford, each carries a matchlock of a large bore, which they handle dexterously enough, and with which they annoy considerably, avoiding at the same time going in large bodies, or approaching too near.

"But what is more to be admired, those Seik *Sirdars*, whose territories border on the King's, were but lately *zemindars* of the Jauts, and of their caste or tribe, under which denomination had they remained, no one would have thought of them; but now they have put on the iron bracelet, fifty of them are enough to keep at bay a whole battalion of the King's forces." Forster writes:

"The Sicques are in general strong and well made; accustomed from their infancy to the most laborious life, and hardest fare, they make marches, and undergo fatigues that really appear astonishing. In their excursions they carry no tents or baggage, except, perhaps, a small tent for the principal officer: the rest shelter themselves under blankets, which serve them also in the cold weather to wrap themselves in, and which, on a march, cover their saddles. They have commonly two, some of them three horses each, of the middle size, strong, active and mild tempered. The provinces of Lahore and Moultan, noted for a breed of the best horses in Hindostan, afford them an ample supply[1]; and indeed they take the greatest care to increase it by all means in their power. Though they make merry on the demise of any of their brethren, they mourn for the death of a horse: thus shewing their love of an animal so necessary to them in their professional capacity.

"The food of the Sicques is of the coarsest kind, and such as the poorest people in Hindostan use from necessity. Bread, baked in the ashes, and soaked in a mesh made of different sorts of pulse is the best dish, and such as they never indulge in but when at full leisure; otherwise, vetches and tares, hastily parched, is all they care for. They abhor smoking tobacco, for what reason I cannot discover; but intoxicate themselves freely with spirits of their own

[1]A report preserved in the National Archives of India states that the Panjab produced "a fine breed of horses, mules, and camels. The Sikhs are passionately fond of horses and are good riders from their youth. There is a saying among them that the home of a Sikh is his saddle." The best horses were bred in the districts of Dhanni and Soen, an excellent quality of mules in the Rawalpindi district and camels in the wild tracts at the termination of the Rechna and Bari Doabs. [Foreign Department, *Miscellaneous Records*, Vol. no. 206, p. 43]

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country manufacture. A cup of the last they never fail taking after a fatigue at night.

"Their dress is extremely scanty: a pair of long blue drawers, and a kind of checkered plaid, a part of which is fastened round the waist, and the other thrown over the shoulder, with a mean turban form their clothing and equipage. The chiefs are distinguished by wearing some heavy gold bracelets on their wrists, and sometimes a chain of the same metal bound round their turbans and by being mounted on better horses; otherwise no distinction appears among them.

"The chiefs are numerous, some of whom have the command of ten or twelve thousand cavalry; but this power is confined to a small number, the inferior officers maintaining from one to two thousand, and many not more than twenty or thirty horses; a certain quota of which is furnished by the chief, the greater part being the individual property of the horsemen."[1]

The army

In the absence of external danger and in the presence of internal disturbance it became imperative for the Sikh chiefs to increase their individual resources and maintain their own standing armies. This brought about an important change in the constitution of Sikh armies. The democratic Khalsa began slowly and gradually to convert itself into a community of feudal lords.

The strength of the Sikh army during this period is variously estimated. Alexander Dow in 1768 computed it at "60,000 good horse."[2] Another writer calculated it in 1772 as follows:

1.	Bhangis, 10,000, about half of whom were in the Cis-Satluj territory		5,000
2.	Dallewalia Misl		7,500
3.	Nishanwala Misl		12,000
4	Karorasinghia Misl		12,000

[1] *Asiatic Annual Register*, 1800, pp. 34-5; Forster, I, 334-35. "The Sicques, from their genius and from the spirit of their Governments," says Forster, "which is a mixture of the aristocratic and republican, are an independent, haughty people, and perhaps nothing less than a general invasion of their country would impel them to act under any common national influence." *PRC*, I, 95.

[2] Dow, II, Appendix, 83.

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5.	Shahid Misl ...	2,000
6.	Phulkian Misl[1]	5,000
		Total 43,500

The author of *Siyar-ul-Mutakharin* wrote in 1782 that "the Sikhs have sent more than once sixty thousand horse in the field."[2] Forster who visited the Panjab in 1783, reckoned it at two lakhs, half of which can safely be attributed to the Cis-Satluj Sikh chiefs.[3]

Browne's estimates which are definitely underestimates in 1785 are as follows:

1.	Raja Gajpat Singh of Jind	... 1500 horse and 500 foot			
2.	Bhag Singh and Bhanga Singh (Dallewalia) of Thanesar	...	750	... 250	...
3.	Karam Singh Nirmala (Nishanwala) of Shahabad	..	750	... 250	...
4.	Gurdit [Sangat] Singh (Nishanwala) of Ambala	...	750	... 250	...
5.	Jassa Singh (Ahluwalia) of Naraingarh	...	1500	... 500	...
6.	Sondha Singh (Dallewalia) of Khanna Sarai	...	225	... 75	...
7.	Hari Singh Dallewalia of Rupar	...	1500	... 500	...
8.	Rae Singh and Bhag Singh (Bhangi) of Buriya	...	750	... 250	...
9.	Diwan Singh Lang (lame) (Dallewalia) of Sikandra	...	750	... 250	...
10.	Dulha Singh (Karorasinghia) of Damla	...	750	... 250	...
11.	Gurdit Singh (Dallewalia) of Babain	...	750	... 250	...
12.	Hakumat Singh (Ahluwalia) of Garhi Kotaha	...	150	... 50	...
13.	Bhagat Singh of Manimajra	...	375	... 125	...
14.	Desu Singh (Dallewalia) of Pehowa	...	1,125	... 375	...
15.	Dhanna Singh (Nishanwala) of Kharar	...	1,500	... 500	...
16.	Sahib Singh of Patiala	...	4,500	... 1,500	...

[1] *History of the Punjab*, I, pp. 225-28.
[2] Forster, I, 333.
[3] *Seir*, I, 19.

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17. Hamir Singh of Nabha[1]	...	600	... 200	...
	Total,	18,225	...6,075	...
			=24,300.	

Francklin in his *History of the Reign of Shah Aulum* puts it in 1793-4 at 66,000 out of the total strength of 248,000.[2] George Thomas estimated it in 1799 at 27,000.[3]

The average of all these estimates comes to 54,400; and hence it can be claimed that the Sikhs of the Cis-Satluj could bring into the field about 50,000 troops.

The military force of the Sikhs consisted essentially of cavalry. They did not like infantry, except for the purpose of garrisoning the forts and performing the mean duties of the service. They employed some artillery; but it was not properly managed, and its uses were not well understood.[4]

The country

On the 14th January, 1764, the Sikhs conquered the Sarhind division of the Delhi province, and seized a vast tract extending from the Sirmur hills and the Jamuna in the east to the boundary of Bahawalpur State in the west, and from the Satluj in the north to Jind and Rohtak in the south, worth about sixty lakhs of rupees annually.

The south-western parts of this territory were sandy, and the south-eastern districts were overgrown with trees. The districts of Jind and Kaithal formed the north-western part of a vast jungle which does not exist now. These districts were therefore thinly populated and the soil though fertile, was not well cultivated. The territory situated to the west of Jind and Kaithal now mostly included in the Patiala district was free from jungle; but land being hard though fertile was destitute of towns and thickly populated villages. The country north of Kaithal and beyond the Ghaggar was well watered by a number of streams, and the soil was extremely productive.[5]

The land tenures

When the Sikh chiefs acquired territories, it became their first

[1]Browne, Introduction, xii.
[2]Francklin, 75.
[3]George Thomas, 68.
[4]Forster, I, 331.
[5]Hamilton, I, 408.

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duty to partition out the lands, cities, towns and villages among their followers who looked upon themselves as having conquered the country in common. The subordinate *sardars*, even of the smallest contingents of horse, who had fought under the standard of a particular *Misl*, demanded their proper share according to their contribution made to the acquision. The chief who had no other compensation to offer for their services, not even pay, had no other course left to him, but to grant them a share in the acquired lands. A sufficient portion was first of all reserved for the chief, while the rest was divided off into equal portions for the subordinate chiefs. Each of these shares was further parcelled to their inferior leaders according to the degree of their services rendered or the number of horse commanded by them. They were again subdivided till the lowest rung of the ladder was reached. Each of them took his portion as a co-sharer and held it to all intents and purposes in absolute independence Each of such shares possessed by the associates of every *Misl* of less rank than that of a *Sardar*, down to the individual horseman who equipped and mounted himself was called *Patti* and the system was known as *Pattidari*. A co-sharer was not considered legitimate to dispose of his tenure to a stranger and in an emergency he was only allowed to mortgage; but he had the right to settle by will at his death which of his male relation should possess it. The only condition of his tenure in relation to the *Sardar* of the *Misl* was the reciprocal aid for mutual protection and defence.

There were also other kinds of tenures which arose out of different circumstances under which the chiefs found themselves placed. One was *Misldari* which was granted as a free reward to petty chiefs or bodies of small strength who had joined a *Misl* without any condition of dependence. The allotment of lands called *Misldari* was therefore held under no condition, and a *Misldar* was at perfect liberty to transfer himself with his lands to any other Sikh chief in case of any dissatisfaction.

The *Jagirdari* tenure was as a rule granted to relations and other well deserving soldiers. In lieu of a *Jagir* the holders were liable to render personal services at any time required by the master and they had to supply a fixed number of horse, equipped and mounted at their own expense, according to the value of the grant. They were also revocable at the sweet will of the donor.

The tenure of *tabadari* was granted to a retainer who was

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completely subservient to the donor. These lands, of course, were the rewards of his services, but they could be forfeited for an act of rebellion or disobedience or at the displeasure of the master for any other cause.

Besides, there were religious and charitable grants made as freeholds by way of endowments for *gurdwaras*, temples, and for charitable distribution.[1]

Distribution of territories

The territories of the Cis-Satluj Sikh Chiefs as distributed by them in January, 1764, stood as follows[2]:

1. *Raja Alha Singh of Patiala* — The Patiala territory extended in the north from the boundary of Malerkotla to the vicinity of Ambala, and some places lying up to the foot of the Shiwalik mountains; in the west it touched the Lakhi Jungle and the country of the Bhattis; in the south it stretched to Hissar, Hansi and Jind; and in the east it was surrounded by Kaithal, Thanesar and Shahabad. Sarhind, a most notable town in the territory between the Jamuna and the Satluj, was included in it. On the fall of Sarhind this town was granted to Buddha Singh, a noted Sikh chief of Jhambowal, by the unanimous vote of the whole Sikh body (*Sarbat Khalsa*). This place was very much coveted by Alha Singh, because it was in the close neighbourhood of his capital (Patiala) and the possession of the old, famous town was sure to enhance his prestige. Consequently, he opened negotiations with Buddha Singh through Gurbakhsh Singh, a nephew of Nawab Kapur Singh, and persuaded him to make over his newly acquired possessions in exchange for Adampur and seven other productive villages. Alha Singh also paid Rs. 25,000 to the Sikhs for *karah prashad* (consecrated food).[3] Buddha Singh seized twenty-eight villages more in the Abohar *ilaka* where his family is still represented.[4]

[1]Prinsep, 33-36; H.M. Lawrence's *Settlement Report of Thanesur District*, 1843, p. 12; *Jullundur District Settlement Report*, 1892, pp. 29-30.

[2]It may be pointed out that these boundaries were "ever in a state of fluctuation" (Forster, I, 324).

[3]It was on February 12, 1764, one month after the conquest of Sarhind that Alha Singh laid the foundation of a strong fortress in his capital at Patiala in order to make it as great and strong as Sarhind (Karam Singh, 228).

[4]Ali-ud-din, 126a; Ratan Singh, 506; Sarup Lal, *Tarikh-e-Sikhan*, 3 4; *Dastur-ul-'amal*, 249-50, 253; *Gosha-e-Panjab*, 45; *Chiefs and Families of Note*, 280-82; *Husain Shahi*, 242; Khushwaqt Rae, 169.

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2. *Nodh Singh Nishanwala*—Chunya Singh was a Jat of Ajnala in Amritsar district. He had four sons, Indar Sain, Chandar Sain, Bhim Sain and Mast Singh. Sardar Indar Sain married by *chādarandāzi* a beautiful woman named Mai Dharmon who gave birth to a son named Nodh Singh. This Nodh Singh was present at the battle of Sarhind in which he was wounded by a bullet. As he could not move farther he seized Kheri, the richest *parganah* of the Ludhiana district, in the close vicinity of Sarhind which was worth Rs. 25,000 a year. He built a small fort at this place and resided there.[1]

3. *Dharam Singh Dallewalia*—Dharam Singh was a cousin of the celebrated Tara Singh Ghaiba. He captured a cluster of villages and founded Dharamsinghwala in the centre where he eventually settled down. His family still resides at this place.[2]

4. *Sudha Singh Bajwa Nishanwala*—Sudha Singh Bajwa seized Machhiwara and the eastern portions of the Utalan *parganah*.[3]

5. *Rae Singh Nishanwala*—Rae Singh, a Kang Jat of Amritsar, secured sixteen villages to the south-west of Khanna in Samralah *tahsil* of Ludhiana district. His descendants still hold *jagir* at Dhirumazra and Jhabumazra.[4]

6. *Rae Singh Karorasinghia*—This Rae Singh was the son of the celebrated Mahtab Singh who had boldly killed Massa *Ranghar*, the Governor of Amritsar. He was a member of the Karorasinghia *Misl* and had impressed his leader Sham Singh so much that the latter married his daughter to him. He seized a group of several villages in Samralah *tahsil* where his descendants still reside at Bhari and Kotla Badla. Ratan Singh, our valuable writer of *Panth Prakash*, was his son.[5]

7. *Sujan Singh Dallewalia*—Sujan Singh, Man Singh and Dan Singh were the sons of Amrik Singh, a Badecha Jat, of the village Dhianpur in Amritsar district, who, later on, had settled at Kang. They were the members of the Dallewalia *Misl* and had seized the *parganahs* of Dharmkot, Mari and Tihara to the south of the Satluj. The descendants of Sujan Singh and Dan Singh still hold *Jagirs* at Shahkot and those of Man Singh at Dhondowal.[6]

[1] *Gosha-e-Panjab*, 24-6.
[2] *Chiefs and Families of Note*, 280-82.
[3] *Ludhiana Settlement Report*, 1878, p. 27; *Ludhiana Gazetteer*, 1888-89, p. 24.
[4] *Chiefs and Families of Note*, 257; *Ludhiana Gazetteer*, 1888-89, p. 109.
[5] *Chiefs and Families of Note*, 262-3.
[6] ibid, 304-5.

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8. Kaur Singh Dallewalia—Kaur Singh and Dharam Singh Jats of Kang were the cousins of Tara Singh Ghaiba of the Dallewalia *Misl*. Kaur Singh occupied a number of villages round about Kang while Lohian fell to the share of his brother. Kaur Singh's family is still represented at Kang.[1]

9. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia—Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, the chief leader of the Dal Khalsa and the founder of Kapurthala State who also commanded his own contingent of 10,000 horse captured the territories of Jagraon, Bharog, Fatahgarh and Naraingarh worth two lakhs a year.[2] Mirza Singh of Sultanwind, a village near Amritsar, was a servant to Sardar Jassa Singh and his two uncles Dasaundha Singh and Hakumat Singh were horsemen. Jassa Singh left Hakumat Singh as his *thanedar* in Bharog, (103 villages), Mirza Singh in Fatahgarh and Dasaundha Singh in Naraingarh.[3]

10. Tara Singh Kakar Dallewalia—Tara Singh Kakar of the Dallewalia *Misl* seized Phillaur, Nurpur, Siala, Kothala, and several other villages along the southern bank of the Satluj.[4]

11. Saundha Singh Dallewalia—Saundha Singh, a Jat of Narowal near Amritsar, was a member of the Dallewalia *Misl* and acquired the estate of Khanna in Ludhiana district, worth Rs. 30,000.[5]

12. Dasaundha Singh Nishanwala—Dasaundha Singh was a Gil Jat, son of Chaudhari Sahib Rae of village Mansur in the Firozpur district. He was the chief leader of the Nishanwala *Misl* and commanded 12,000 horse. He took possession of the *ilakas* of Singhanwala, Sahnewal, Sarai Lashkari Khan, Doraha, Amloh, Zira, Liddhar and Ambala and made the last named place his headquarters. On his death he was succeeded by his younger brother Sangat Singh. Mohar Singh about whom we shall come across many references was Sangat Singh's son.[6]

13. Jai Singh Nishanwala—Jai Singh, a Gurm Jat of village Karanke Dhirke near Atari, was a member of the Nishanwala *Misl*. He seized twenty-seven villages in the *parganah* of Lidhran and

[1]Ibid, 306-7.

[2]Ali-ud-din, 126b; *Dastur-ul-'amal*, 45-6; *Raj Khalsa*, 375.

[3]Punjab Government Records, *Selections from Notebook kept by Captain G. Birch*, 1818-1821, IX, no. 17, p. 129.

[4]Bute Shah, 256a.

[5]Sarup Lal, *Tarikh-e-Sikhan*, 147; *Jullundur Settlement Report*, 1892, p. 37.

[6]*Raj Khalsa*, 50-1; Sarup Lal, *Tarikh-e-Sikhan*, 51; Ganesh Das, 206; Bute Shah, 266b–267a, 274b–275a.

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seven in Kharar yielding about Rs. 60,000 per annum.[1]

14. Nahar Singh and Surjan Singh—Nahar Singh and Surjan Singh Sodhis acquired the *ilaka* of Anandpur and Makhowal worth three lakhs a year.[2]

15. Hari Singh Dallewalia—Hari Singh, a Birk Jat of Kaleki near Kasur, was a noted member of the Dallewalia *Misl*. He seized the territories of *Rupar*, Sialba, Awankot, Khizarabad, Siswan and Korali. He also captured the fort of Khizarabad built by Chaudhari Tek Chand.[3]

16. Khushhal Singh Singhpuria—Khushhal Singh Singhpuria, the son of the famous Nawab Kapur Singh of Faizullahpur, the founder of the Singhpuria *Misl* had succeeded to the leadership of the confederacy in 1753 on the death of the Nawab. He already owned a territory worth three lakhs a year and at this time he occupied the *parganahs* of Chhat, Banur, Manauli, Ghanauli, Bharatgarh, Kandaulah, Bunga, Bhareli and Chune Machhli fetching him another one lakh and a half annually.[4]

17. Jai Singh, Ram Singh, Sardha Singh, Sahib Singh, Bakht Singh, Kanwar Singh, and *Mathan Singh* of village Kang and members of the Dallewalia *Misl* took possession of the *parganah* of Kahmanon, consisting of fifty-five villages. These seven chiefs commanded a contingent of 126 soldiers and dividing the *parganah* into three parts, set themselves up as independent chiefs.[5]

18. Karam Singh Shahid—Karam Singh was a Sidhu Jat of village Mahraka, 35kms westward of Lahore. He commanded nearly 300 horse. He took possession of a number of villages in the *parganahs* of Shahzadpur and Kesari in Ambala district yielding about a lakh a year. He also seized a territory about Rania[6], Damdama Sahib, and Jarauli. His family is still represented at

[1] *The Rajas of the Punjab*, 45; *Ludhiana Gazetteer*, 1888-9, p. 108; *Chiefs and Families of Note*, 251.

[2] Sarup Lal, *Tarikh-e-Sikhan*, 150.

[3] Khushwaqt Rae, 187; Bute Shah, 250b; Ali-ud-din, 126a; Sarup Lal, 32-5; *Dastur-ul-'amal*, 96; *Jullundur Settlement Report*, 1892, pp. 37-8.

This Hari Singh had abducted Rajan, the widowed sister-in-law of Chuharmal, the Phagwara Chaudhari, an adventure till recently the subject of a popular song, Bute Shah, 250b.

[4] *Raj Khalsa*, 48; Sarup Lal, 409; Ali-ud-din, 126b.

[5] Bute Shah, 258b.

[6] *The Rajas of the Punjab*, 44; Sarup Lal, 71; *Chiefs and Families of Note*, 229.

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Shahzadpur. Quite adjacent to Shahzadpur is the territory of Majri which was occupied by Surat Singh Akali of Anandpur. [1]

19. Desu Singh Dallewalia—Desu Singh of Alawalpur near Taran Taran, 23 kms south of Amritsar, a member of the Dallewalia *Misl*, secured the *parganah* of Mustafabad in Jagadhri *tahsil* and of Dera and Tandwal in the Ambala *tahsil*.[2] He also captured Arnauli, Sindhuwal, Bangar, Amlu and Kularkharyal. In 1767 he seized the principality of Kaithal.[3]

20. Rae Singh Bhangi—Lakhmir Singh was a Jat of the village Chaumak which is situated about 45 kms southward of Amritsar. He had four sons, Bagh Singh, Baz Singh, Rae Singh and Parja Singh. At the time of one of the invasions of Ahmad Shah Durrani Parja Singh was taken captive and was converted to Islam. He came back home after a long time but remained a Musalman. The remaining three brothers took *pahul* from the Bhangi chief, joined the band commanded by Jhanda Singh and started on a career of plunder and rapine.

At this time the three brothers joined Nanu Singh, a Jat of Jhawalmandan near Amritsar and seized Buriya, Jagadhri, and the neighbouring territory consisting of 204 villages in all.[4]

21. Jodh Singh Karorasinghia—Gurbakhsh Singh a Sandhu Jat of village Kalsia in *tahsil* Kasur of Lahore district, was a prominent member of the Karorasinghia *Misl*. He appropriated to himself the *parganahs* of Basi, Chhachhrauli and Charak in Ambala district.[5] He possessed a force of 3,000 horse. His family is still represented at Chhachhrauli. Karam Singh, another resident of village Kalsia, took possession of Bilaspur *parganah* in Jagadhri *tahsil*. Dyal Singh and Nodh Singh from the same village seized the *parganahs* of Kot and Dharmkot respectively.[6]

[1]Khushwaqt Rae, 185; Bute Shah, 194a-b.

[2]*Chiefs and Families of Note*, 223; Sarup Lal, 41-2; Bute Shah, 263b-264a.

[3]Gian Singh, 852.

[4]Khushwaqt Rae, 186; *Chiefs and Families of Note*, 215, 277-8; *The Rajas of the Punjab*, 46; Ali-ud-din, 126b; Bute Shah, 217a; Sarup Lal, 65-6.

They built a fort near Buriya, which they named Dayalgarh, and made it their headquarters. *Chiefs and Families of Note*, 227.

Jagadhri had been utterly destroyed by Nadir Shah, but it was rebuilt by Rae Singh who encouraged the commercial and manufacturing classes to settle there. *Ambala Gazetteer*, 69.

[5]*Gasha-e-Panjab*, 29-30; *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, 1908, *Punjab*, II, 366; *Chiefs and Families of Note*, 83.

[6]Khushwaqt Rae, 186; *Gosha-e-Panjab*, 29.

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22. Diwan Singh Lang Dallewalia—Diwan Singh Lang, a Kalal of Basi near Amritsar, a member of the Dallewalia *Misl*, took possession of the *parganahs* Sikandra, Saran, Akalgarh and Brara in the Ambala district with his headquarters at Sikandra.[1]

23. Karam Singh Nirmala—Karam Singh, a Sidhu Jat of the Nishanwala *Misl* seized the *parganahs* of Shahabad and Ismailabad in Thanesar district situated on the Grand Trunk Road, 25 kms south of Ambala.[2]

24. Gurbakhsh Singh Shahid—Gurbakhsh Singh of village Gangubaha in Taran Taran *tahsil* of Amritsar district was one of the leaders of the Shahid *Misl*. He occupied a number of villages in the *bet* tract of the Markanda river and set up his headquarters at Tangaur where his family is still represented.[3]

25. Nodh Singh Karorasinghia—Nodh Singh a resident of Kalsia village was a leader of consequence of the Karorasinghia *Misl*, who maintained a contingent of 200 horsemen and occupied the *parganah* of Leda where his family is still represented.[4]

26. Sahib Singh and Gurdit Singh Dallewalia—Sahib Singh Khondah and Gurdit Singh, the two brothers, Sansi Jats of the village Veyeen Pooeen of the Amritsar district, members of the Dallewalia *Misl*, seized Ladwa, Indri, Babain and Shamgarh territories in the close vicinity of Karnal consisting of 117 villages. Babain was the seat of Sahib Singh nicknamed Khondah, and Ladwa of Gurdit Singh.[5]

27. Mit Singh Dallewalia—Bhai Mit Singh of Sirhali, 35 kms south of Amritsar, together with his three nephews Bhanga Singh, Bhag Singh and Budh Singh belonged to the Dallewalia *Misl*.[6] They seized the territory of Pehowa and the suburbs of Thanesar

[1]Bute Shah, 262b—263a. Sarup Lal, 39; *Jullundur Settlement Report*, 1892, p. 37; Wynard's *Settlement Report of the Southern Parganahs of the Ambala District*, 21.

[2]Khushwaqt Rae, 185; Bute Shah, 272b—274a; Ali-ud-din, 126a; Sarup Lal, 58, 147; *Chiefs and Families of Note*, 216.

[3]*Chiefs and Families of Note*, 217-19.

[4]*Gosha-e-Panjab*, 29; *Chiefs and Families of Note*, 225-6.

[5]Khushwaqt Rae, 184; Bute Shah, 254b—255a; Ali-ud-din, 126a; *Karnal Gazetteer*, 33. Later on this principality comprised of 178 villages, yielding 2.5 lakhs annually. *Calcutta Review*, II, October—December, 1844, p. 198.

[6]Mit Singh was a personal attendant (*garwabardar*) to Tara Singh Ghaiba, carrying a drinking vessel and water for him.

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and built a strong fort at Kanod where they established their headquarters. He laid the foundation of the principality of Thanesar.[1]

28. Baghel Singh Karorasinghia—Baghel Singh of village Jhabal near Amritsar seized Khurdin, Kinori, Jamaitgarh and Chhalondi (his headquarters) yielding three lakhs annually. Baghel Singh, "one of the most active and renowned chieftains," dominated the Karorasinghia *Misl* during the last thirty-five years of the eighteenth century.[2]

29. Dulha Singh Karorasinghia—Dulha (not Dulcha) Singh occupied Radaur, 11 kms north-east of Ladwa, and Damla.[3]

30. Acquisitions of the Phulkian Rajas—Alha Singh seized the territories of Pail, Basi, Latbara and Isru.[4] Hamir Singh of Nabha captured the *parganahs* of Bhadson, Amloh, Wirro and Bhagso.[5] Mān Singh took possession of Malod,[6] while Gajpat[7] Singh of Jind acquired Safidon.[8]

31. Sawan Singh—Sawan Singh was a cousin of the famous Dasaundha Singh and Sangat Singh of the Nishanwala *Misl*. He appropriated to himself several villages around Sonti where he settled down. His family is still represented at Mansurwal in the Firozpur district.[9]

32. Gujar Singh Bhangi—Gujar Singh Bhangi with his brother Nusbaha Singh and his two nephews Gurbakhsh Singh and Mastan Singh took possession of Firozpur, while Jai Singh Gharia who commanded another band of Bhangis seized Khai, Wan and Bajidpur in the neighbourhood of Firozpur and made them over to their subordinates. The Sikh territory here then contained thirty-seven villages.[10]

[1]Khushwaqt Rae, 184; Bute Shah, 252b-253a; Ali-ud-din, 126a; *The Rajas of the Punjab*, 56; *Chiefs and Families of Note*, 183; *Gosha-e-Panjab*, 24-6; *Jullundur Settlement Report*, 1892, p. 37.

[2]*Raj Khalsa*, 33.

[3]Khushwaqt Rae on p. 108, and Sarup Lal on pp. 58, 68-69, 70, 73 call him Dule Singh. Dulcha Singh appears to be wrong.

[4]Gian Singh, 852.

[5]ibid, 852; *Raj Khalsa*, 466.

[6]Gian Singh, 852.

[7]Khushwaqt Rae, 175.

[8]Gian Singh, 852; *Karnal Gazetteer*, 33; *Imperial Gazetteer of India, Punjab*, I, 316; *Punjab States Gazetteers*, XVII, A, 215, 341.

[9]*Chiefs and Families of Note*, 286.

[10]*Ferozepur Gazetteer*, 16.

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33. Tara Singh Ghaiba—Tara Singh Ghaiba, a prominent leader of the Dallewalia *Misl*, extended his conquests as far as Ramuwala and Mari in the Moga *tahsil* at both of which places he built forts.

34. Mehar Singh Nishanwala—Mehar Singh of the Nishanwala *Misl*, who commanded a force of 200 horse, captured several villages in the Zira *tahsil* of the Firozpur district.[1]

35. Panjab Singh Nishanwala seized Sadhaura and the neighbouring villages of the Ambala district.[2]

Non-Sikh possessions

Mixed up among these Sikh estates lay some Muslim and Hindu territories, the owners of which saved themselves by coalescing with the powerful Sikh leaders of their neighbourhood and paying them tribute.[3] Rae Ilyas of Raekot retained most of the Ludhiana and Jagraon tahsils and also a large portion of Firozpur district.[4] His territory included several forts such as Tihara, Ludhiana, Sarih, Jagraon and Raekot. He was an ally of Raja Amar Singh and commanded a force of 500 horse, 1,000 foot, and a few pieces of cannon. The Afghan colonies of Kunjpura consisting of 53 villages worth half a lakh a year, Malerkotla containing 96 villages yielding one lakh annually, Mamdot near Firozpur and Kotla Nihang near Rupar also maintained their independence. The Nawab of Malerkotla maintained a force of about 1,000 horse and foot and was in alliance with the Raja of Patiala.[5]

Gharib Das, a Hindu chief, seized a group of 84 villages in the parganahs of Manimājra and Mullānpur which were held by his father Ganga Ram as a revenue officer. Manimājra became the capital of the new principality which he further extended by the capture of the fort of Pinjor situated in a lovely garden at the foot of the Shiwalik Hills. Kalka was also included in his territory.[6]

[1]Khushwaqt Rae, 185.
[2]Ali-ud-din, 126b.
[3]Ratan Singh, 509; Ali-ud-din, 126a.
[4]*Husain Shahi*, 240-41; *Ludhiana Gazetteer*, 1888-89, p. 112; *Imperial Gazetteer of India, Punjab*, I, 426.
[5]*Husain Shahi*, 241; Ali-ud-din, 126a; Sarup Lal, 129, 134, 135, 136; *Calcutta Review*, II, October-December, 1844, p. 200.
[6]*Dastur-ul-'amal*, 302; *Ambala Gazetteer*, 78.

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CHAPTER 4

Najib-ud-daulah, Dictator of Mughal Empire, beaten by the Sikhs, 1764—1768

The first Sikh raid into the upper Ganga Doab, February, 1764

The Sikhs took Sarhind on the 14th January, 1764, spent about a month in occupying its territory, and by the middle of February, 1764 poured into the upper Ganga Doab, by crossing the Jamuna at Buriya Ghat. This was the Budha Dal because the Taruna Dal had come back to the Panjab immediately after the fall of Sarhind.

The Sikhs under their leader Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, including other Sikh chiefs like Khushhal Singh, Baghel Singh, Karora Singh, Sham Singh, Tara Singh Ghaiba, Gurbakhsh Singh, Bhanga Singh, Karam Singh and Rae Singh, at the head of about 40,000 horse plundered Saharanpur (20th February, 1764), Shamli, Kandhlah, Ambli, Miranpur, Deoband, Muzaffarnagar, Jawalapur, Kankhal, Landhaurah, Najibabad, Nagina, Moradabad, Chandausi, Anupshahr and Garhmukteshar.[1]

This was the first time after Banda Bahadur that the Sikhs had gone across the Jamuna and plundered the villages of Bārah, which had for a long time past been the homes of respectable men of old Sayyid families. They took booty beyond count in coins, gold and jewels, burnt the country and took away captives (for ransom). Najib-ud-daulah (the owner of the district), being distracted by the news, marched towards the Sikhs, and by fast movement arrived near them.

Najib-ud-daulah paid eleven lakhs as blackmail, February, 1764

Najib-ud-daulah had just defeated and slain Suraj Mal and was expecting severe retribution from his son Jawahir Singh and the

[1]Miskin, 263; Browne II, 24; Bakhtmal, 103; *S.P.D.*, XXIX, 85; Ratan Singh, 507; G.R.C. Williams in *Calcutta Review*, LX January, 1875, p. 26; Gian Singh, 854-7; *Shamshir Khalsa*, 114.

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entire Jat nation, who were making headlong preparations for the same. In view of these difficulties the Sikh inroad greatly embarassed him, and he preferred to buy off the Sikhs by paying a blackmail of eleven lakhs of rupees. By this time the Taruna Dal was threatening Lahore and the Sikhs, therefore, accepted the bribe and hurried back to the Panjab early in March. It was, however, the beginning of their biannual raids in these new territories [1]

Tahmas Khan Miskin who fought with the Sikhs in these campaigns in the army of Najib-ud-daulah, writes: "The Sikhs after having completed their occupation and settlement of the Sarhind district in one year (month) made a further advance. In that year 40,000 of their horsemen crossed the Jamuna and disturbed and looted the Saharanpur and Meerut districts. Nawab Najib Khan, for a month or two, moved in every direction where the Sikhs were reported to be roving, in order to protect the country, and fought and usually defeated them. As they did not make a firm stand anywhere and offer battle, he had to run back after them, but they did not give up their jackal tricks."[2]

Second Sikh invasion across the Jamuna, November-December, 1764

Suraj Mal, the most famous and greatest of the Jat Rajas of Bharatpur was accidentally killed on the 25th December, 1763 in a battle with Najib-ud-daullah. His youthful son Jawahir Singh and the entire Jat nation determined to avenge themselves upon the slayer of their chief. Jawahir Singh made preparation on a large scale in the course of the following year. He also hired the services of the Marathas and the Sikhs.

These activities of the young Jat Raja gave Najib a fright. Anticipating that the storm must burst upon him, Najib sent his envoy Meghraj to Ahmad Shah Abdali in Kandhar appealing for help and protection. Meghraj passed through the Panjab in September-October, along the foot of the northern hills via Jammu as the direct road through Lahore had been closed by the Sikhs.[3] Najib then tried to pacify Jawahir Singh, but with him it was a question of honour and prestige, and so he stuck to his resolution. He marched upon Delhi early in November and besieged Najib-ud-daulah in the city. This offered a chance to the Sikhs as Najib's estates in

[1] Nur-ud-din, 72a-b; *S.P.D.*, XXIX, 55.
[2] Miskin, 266; cf. Sarkar, II, 395.
[3] *S.P.D.*, XXIX, 73.

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Saharanpur, Meerut, Bijnor, etc. lay unprotected. The Budha Dal under Jassa Singh Ahluwalia crossed the Jamuna at Buriya Ghat and entered the Ganga Doab.

They swept over the major portion of this rich territory and displayed great alacrity in searching for loot, even piercing to the remotest villages situated at the foot of the hills. Najib was besieged in Delhi, and Hafiz Rahmat Khan at the head of a detachment of 6,000 offered the intruders only nominal resistance and then quietly retired. This visitation of the Sikhs is numbered among the most terrible ones which ever befell this unfortunate country.[1]

Sikh-Jat alliance against Najib-ud-daulah, January, 1765

Jawahir Singh had besieged Najib-ud-daulah in Delhi early in November, 1764; but the siege was prolonged on account of the lukewarmness of Jawahir's ally Malhar Rao who was inclined towards Najib. This made Jawahir Singh seek assistance in another quarter. He invited the Sikhs, who were plundering the Ganga Doab, to Delhi and concluded his negotiations with them, promising to give a large sum of money and taking 12-15,000 of them in his pay.[2] "The Sikhs arrived (early in January, 1765) at Barari Ghat, 20 kms from the city. The river on that side was fordable. Jawahir Singh crossed it, and went to interview the Sikhs. But here his relations with them did not become friendly. They hindered the driver of the elephant ridden by Jawahir from coming to the assembly of interview. More than a hundred Sardars, as arranged, came and interviewed (him). The sitting of the conference commenced with a prayer, which in their terminology is called *Ardas*. In it they said, 'Jawahir Singh, the son of Surajmal, has come within the shelter of the *Khalsa Jiu* and become a Sikh of Nanak. He is demanding redress for his father's blood. This behaviour was disliked by Jawahir Singh. They also drove out the *huqqa-bearer* of Jawahir Singh with insult and abuse. But he was in the utmost need (of Sikh assistance) and bore all this. It was settled (that) the Sikhs would prepare for fight and form trenches in the direction from which they had come, namely the north of the city; the *Subahdar* (Malhar) and Jawahir Singh would fight as before from the eastern side; while the Sikh horsemen would succour the country on the west so as to

[1] *Gulistan-e-Rahmat*, 84-5; G.R.C. Williams, *Calcutta Review*, IX, January, 1875, pp. 26-7.

[2] Munna Lal, 93; Father Wendel, 97; but 20,000 according to Miskin, 264.

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cut off provisions from the city totally. The fighting went on in this way for twenty days. It will be interesting to note that Alha Singh's soldiers numbering 1,000, under Bhola Singh fought on the side of Najib-ud-daulah on this occasion.[1]

The Sikh-Rohilla contest outside Delhi

The method of fighting between the Sikhs and Najib-ud daulah is described in a picturesque way by the eyewitness Nur-ud-din which we reproduce below:

"Every day the Sikh troopers used to ride out and enter the old houses which lay desolate, near the garden of Yaqub Ali Khan on the river bank, such as the mansions of Namkin and Hafiz-ud-din Khan and the Badalpura and other *mohallas*, and wished to come towards the city walls. Najib, leaving men at different places in the trenches near the river, himself with a force of horse and foot and his kettle-drums mounted on elephants, etc, came out by the Lahori Gate, posted his men each under the cover of some ruined house or lane, while he himself sat down on a stone. The Rohillas engaged the Sikhs with their matchlocks. The musketry fight continued briskly till two *gharis* after nightfall. Mian Niaz Gul, a *risaldar* of Najib, was wounded with a bullet. The Rohilla infantry plied their muskets well. Najib told his men to fire their rockets wherever the Sikh horsemen were standing crowded in a knot, so that they were scattered by the rockets. At some places fighting took place and many Sikhs were wounded. About the time of sunset, a Sikh who wore silver armour, fell down from his horse and the Sikhs wished to carry his corpse off, while the Rohillas, desiring to seize his property, attempted to detain the body. Here the battle raged furiously ; three Rohillas were slain and seven wounded, while many of the Sikhs also were wounded. At last the Rohillas with drawn swords dragged the corpse away. A pouch was found in his belt, containing gold coins, valued at Rs. 1,000. In this manner fighting with the Sikhs went on for nearly one month. At three *pahars* of the day Najib-ud-daulah used to come out of the city, and the Sikhs also and some of Jawahir's troops sent for aiding them used to arrive on the scene, and they used to fight till sunset. After sunset each party went back to its camp "[2]

[1]Nur-ud-din, 82b-83a; Karam Singh, 232.
[2]Nur-ud-din, 84b-85b.

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"January 9, 1765. News from Delhi. Najib-ud-daulah has been defeated by Jawahir Singh, and has retired into the fort. The city has fallen into the hands of Jawahir Singh. Najib-ud-daulah is desirous of going to his own country through the assistance of the Marathas."[1]

Another great battle was fought between Najib and the Sikhs aided by the Jats, on the 25th January, 1765 on the hill near the Horse Market (*Nakhas*) and the Sabzimandi, in which a large number of men were slain and wounded, but the result was indecisive as usual.[2]

The Sikhs suddenly retire from Delhi, February, 1765

The fighting was going on in Delhi in this way when the news reached the Sikhs that the Abdali was advancing towards Delhi. The Sikhs as a consequence suddenly retired to the Panjab, even without asking leave of Jawahir Singh.

Sikhs plunder Najib's country, October, 1765

Ahmad Shah returned from Kunjpura near Karnal, in March 1765. The Sikhs spent summer in gathering harvests. In July the rains had set in and the rivers and streams on all sides were in flood and became impassable. The next two months were spent in consolidating their holdings, and by the close of the rainy weather (September) they gathered together at Amritsar. They decided to invade the country of Najib-ud-daulah, Ahmad Shah's plenipotentiary and Dictator of Delhi.

They marched thither and after passing Sarhind divided themselves into two bodies. The Taruna Dal crossed the Jamuna at Buriya Ghat and entered Saharanpur district, while the Budha Dal consisting of 25,000 horse under the leadership of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and Tara Singh, Sham Singh, and other sardars attacked Najib's *jagirs* in the country north of Delhi.[3]

Najib with 10,000 soldiers was busy in reducing rebellious villages in the Bhiwani and Rohtak *parganahs* and had succeeded in impressing his power on the Narnaul side. On hearing that

[1] *C.P.C.*, I, 2533A.
[2] *Delhi Chronicle*, 200; Nur-ud-din, 92a.
[3] *S.P.D.*, XXIX, 99, 102.

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the Sikhs were levying blackmail on his country, he advanced towards them and met the situation with such skill and persistence as was to be expected from the leading Muslim general of the time after Ahmad Shah Durrani. The Raja of Bhatner and Amar Singh, grandson and successor of Alha Singh, also marched from their places to join Najib-ud-daulah against the Sikh.[1]

Najib-ud-daulah himself wrote a letter to the Emperor Shah Alam II then residing at Allahabad, on the 3rd November, 1765 and described the Sikh depredations and his own measures for defence thus:—"The infidels (Sikhs) having with all malevolence advanced as far as Panipat and Satalak, proposed proceeding directly to Shahjahanabad. But upon his sending forward his tent to Mahaldar Khan's garden and collecting a number of new and old troops, they perceived that they had not then an opportunity of putting their designs into execution. And so after ravaging and plundering the circumjacent villages, they retreated. Their retreat was also due to the fact that the time for the celebration of the Chak[2] was near at hand. As they are under no apprehension of troubles from any quarter, they are determined to come this way after that festival. To the writer it appears to be a very difficult matter to punish them. It can be effected only by the blessing of God and His Majesty's auspices. As far as lies in his power, he will not be negligent in giving proofs of his fidelity and attachment. With this view he has assembled all his forces from the different districts, and having left the city, has encamped on the frontiers in order that the enemy may be struck with terror and also that his troops may all be together."[3]

The battle between the Sikhs and Najib near Shamli, December, 1765

The Sikhs on the east side of the Jamuna after ravaging a part of Najib's territory and the imperial dominion returned to Amritsar. Soon after Diwali celebration they came to Ganga Doab and commenced plundering Najib's villages. Najib-ud-daulah who had anticipated this irruption and had been making preparations, since their last departure from his country, marched to

[1]ibid; Nur-ud-din, 100 a; Sarkar, II, 396.

[2]To celebrate at Amritsar the Diwali festival which fell on October 14,1765.

[3]*C.P.C.*, II, 2735A, 2735C and 2735D, all dated November 3, 1765.

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oppose their advance, and met them near Shamli, 20 kms east of Karnal.

Nur-ud-din, the biographer of Najib-ud-daulah, gives a vivid and graphic pen-picture of this battle which we reproduce here in a summary way. Every day there were many skirmishes between the two sides. One day a severe battle was fought. It raged the whole day. About four *gharis* after nightfall, the Sikhs took shelter in the neighbouring sugar-cane plantations and plied their matchlocks from there. From time to time they came out, and band after band emptied their matchlocks and went off. This kind of warfare continued for three hours of the night, when the Sikhs retired to their place of rest.

The next morning Najib got up early and marched towards the Sikhs in an organized form. His right wing was under Sultan Khan, his full brother; left wing under Zabitah Khan, his son; vanguard under Karam Khan Razzar; rearguard in charge of Afzal Khan, his brother, while Zain Khan, the chief of his artillery, accompanied him with small guns. Najib had not gone far when the Sikhs surrounded them on all four sides and the fight began one hour after dawn. The fire of battle raged till noon, when a dry nullah intervened in their path, and certain loaded carts of Najib found it difficult to get over it. The Sikhs just at this moment came up running, and clashing with the division of Zabitah Khan in a mango garden, performed excellent *barqandazi*. Many men were wounded on the two sides. The Sikhs wished to contrive things in such a way as by keeping the Rohillas engaged in fighting they would detain them from advancing for some time and utilise this delay in setting their own camp on the march and carry it towards the river. But Najib did not at all stop his advance, and, in the division of Zabitah Khan many men were slain.

The battle raged furiously till late in the afternoon. The bank of the Jamuna, where the Sikhs had placed their baggage train came also near. The Sikhs formed the plan of gaining a little respite by any means, so that their camp might cross the river with ease, and in that event their entire property and baggage would escape plunder. They fell upon the rear. Najib's soldiers being hard-pressed asked him to permit them only once to attack the Sikhs at full gallop and repel them, otherwise the Rohillas

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would die silently under the enemy blows. Najib replied: "The halting place of the Sikhs is now very close. Have patience for a little while and we shall reach their camp and then much booty will fall into our hands. When their camp is once beaten up, they will not again spread through the country, and the plunderers who have joined them will be put to distress and return to their homes."

A severe scuffle ensued between the Sikhs and Najib's rear, in which the former gave a very hard time to the latter. Every time the Sikhs fell on the Rohillas with renewed vigour, making a great noise and tumult, shouting, "Wah Guru, Wah Guru!" Najib then himself came to the rescue of the rearguard with the *zamburaks* and his household squadron. The Sikhs, on seeing Najib's flag went to a greater distance and stood on a mound emptying their matchlocks. Najib-ud-daulah attacked them there and drove them away from the hillock. By this time night had approached. Najib stayed where he was standing while the Sikhs crossed the Jamuna with all their baggage and camp in the darkness. In the morning not one horseman of them was seen anywhere.[1]

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The plunder of the Jat country, Rewari and Jaipur, January-February, 1766

After the battle of Shamli the Taruna Dal advanced towards Delhi, and joined the Budha Dal in the neighbourhood of Kharkhauda, east of Rohtak and 32 kms, one day's march, from Delhi.

Najib-ud-daulah closely followed them and when they halted in the neighbourhood of Buwana he encamped at Sarai Sitaram. As Najib's men were on the alert and ready to offer battle, the Sikhs marched onward plundering and pillaging the country of Jat Rajah, a little south of Delhi.[2]

Jawahir Singh, the Jat Raja of Bharatpur, was already hard-pressed by the Marathas. He could not bear the onslaught of the Sikhs. He sought for peace and opened negotiations with them through his *vakil* Ram Kishor Ahir. He paid them a subsidy of 7 lakhs of Rupees in order to bring their marauding activities to an end, and hired a body of 7,000 of their horse to fight the

[1]Nur-ud-din, 100b-106a; *S.P.D.*, XXIX, 102 dated December 19, 1765.
[2]*S.P.D.*, XXIX, 102; Nur-ud-din, 106b.

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Marathas on his side. Jassa Singh, Tara Singh, Sham Singh and two other sardars remained there, while the others spread over the country of Najib-ud-daulah and again began to desolate villages in the Mian Doab. Najib pursued them as far as the Sonepat district and then they retired towards their homes.[1]

Wendel, a contemporary French historian, living at Agra, writes: "His own country is the prey of the enemy (Marathas) who followed him close and he must either make an inglorious peace or risk all his fortune in a new war. Obstinately he has chosen the latter course, taken at a vast expense a corps of 20-25,000 Sikhs who had at that time come to his own country to ravage it; blind obstinacy of the Raja! He has been previously obliged to pay an advance of seven lakh rupees to these barbarous allies for desolating two of his entire provinces. The expedition will end in his openly falling out with them; and he will at last have the Sikhs as well as the Rajputs on his hands. Thus his father's treasures are taking wing!"[2]

Jawahir Singh and the Sikhs concerted a plan of action and it seems to have been decided to divert the concentration of the Maratha forces from the Jat kingdom's frontiers by attacking their ally Raja Madho Singh of Jaipur. The Sikhs marched thither and decided to plunder the rich town of Rewari on their way. Below we give the interesting account of the plunder of Rewari in the words of Nur-ud-din :—"The Sikhs, by forced marches at night made a raid one hundred kms from their place, upon the town of Rewari, 85 kms from Delhi, and close to Mewat. They plundered and burnt it and took prisoners (for ransom). This town had been flourishing for a long time past and was included in the *jagir* of Raja Nagar Mal Khatri, a high civil officer of the Emperor. The *amil* of the place on behalf of Raja Nagar Mal was totally off his guard. He now shut himself up in a mansion, and with a few hundred foot-soldiers that he had, fought all the day ; and at night, by reason of his knowledge of the country, effected his escape from it (though) in utter ruin, and went to the territory of the Jat Raja where Nagar Mal himself was. The ryots of Rewari were plundered to the extreme; only the people who reached

[1] *S.P.D.*, XXIX, 121, 177, 197.
[2] *History of the Jats* (French MS), 108b.

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Gokulgarh (a fortalice) constructed by the zamindar of that place and standing one km from Rewari, remained safe.[1]

Jawahir Singh's younger step-brother Nahar Singh was the chief of Dholpur. He had an extremely beautiful wife who was coveted by Jawahir Singh. He asked the Sikhs to attack him. Nahar Singh invited Malhar Rao Holkar to help him. Nahar Singh conveyed his family for shelter into the neighbouring territory of Jaipur. Jawahir Singh asked the Sikhs to ravage Jaipur villages.

The Sikhs then entered the territory of Raja Madho Singh of Jaipur, and joined by Jawahir Singh's forces began to loot the villages and towns unopposed, and sacked Kot Putli. Dulerai (the *Bakhshi*) and Jai Chand (the *Khan-e-saman*) were away from Jaipur to lay siege to the fort of Kanaud held by Ratan Singh Khangarot, a rebel chief against Jaipur. The Sikhs encamped 25 kms distant. The Sikh forces were overwhelming and Madho Singh in utter helplessness appealed for Maratha help on promising a daily allowance of Rs. 5,000 by way of expenses. Sindhia's contingent was at once despatched against Jawahir Singh, while the Sikhs were bought off by the Jaipur Raja. Jawahir Singh patched up a truce with Madho Singh and returned to his country taking the Sikhs with him.[2]

The Sikhs fight Marathas near Dholpur, 13-14 March, 1766

The Marathas under Malhar with their camp at Dholpur were carrying on frequent lightning raids into the Jat territory, while on the other hand the Sikhs were growing refractory for want of payment and they also began to lay waste that country. Jawahir Singh could not do without their help and conciliated the Sikhs numbering 7 to 8,000 whom he had been keeping in his pay. Then leaving his camp in Shahgarh, Jawahir Singh with a light force and some guns marched to fight the Marathas and engaged them at a distance of 20 kms from Dholpur, on the 13th and 14th March. First the Sikhs advanced and the Marathas defeated them killing 50 to 100 of their body. The Sikhs turning back came close to Jawahir, and the exultant Marathas chased them "thinking the enemy had fled." This brought them within the range of the fire of the Jat guns, while the Sikhs arranged them-

[1]Nur-ud-din, 106b-107a; *S.P.D.*, XXIX, 121.
[2]*S.P.D.*, XXIX, 99, 102, 121, 127, 197; Khushwaqt Rae, 104.

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selves on the flanks of the Jat army and they advanced in a body firing. The Marathas seeing their folly in being so easily taken in by the cunning trick of the wily Sikhs, began to retreat towards evening. Just at this juncture the Sikhs and Jats delivered an assault. Many of the Maratha troops lost their lives, while several hundreds of their horses were captured in the ravines of the Chambal. The Maratha generals, being defeated, took shelter in Dholpur. Sultanji, a prominent Maratha chief, was taken captive while lying wounded in the battle-field. Jawahir Singh followed up his victory, seized Dholpur and captured all the Maratha generals.[1]

The Sikhs plunder the country of Najib, but are defeated by him, 16—20 April, 1766

After the defeat of the Marathas at Dholpur Jawahir Singh wanted to advance upon Malhar Rao Holkar, then a dying man and lying encamped beyond the Chambal. He would have probably defeated him had not his Sikh allies absolutely refused to march to a grassless and waterless tract under the oppressive heat of the burning sun. The Sikhs marched back to their country. Jawahir Singh accompanied them up to Sarai Khwajah and made them cross his frontiers at Ghat Tilpat, and then himself went back to Palwal. His coming back was solely for the sake of defending his own realm against the depredations of the retreating Sikh troops. He had the Sikhs in front, on one side the Gosains, on the other side Samru and Monsieur Rene Madec and others, and himself in the rear of his army, while some generals were posted in front of the Sikhs. He thus placed them in the centre, and in this arrangement took them out of his realm. Then they approached Delhi and began to loot Najib's *jagir*. At their approach near the imperial capital, Afzal Khan, the Delhi agent of Najib-ud-daulah, proclaimed on the 15th April by beat of drum that none from the city should go out to visit Kalka Devi. Next day early in the morning he began to strengthen the city defences and despatched scouts to bring intelligence about the enemy's movements. He himself along with Yaqub Ali Khan took up his position at the Delhi Gate of the city. On the 17th April it was learnt that the Sikhs, marching from Okhlaghat had looted rice and sugar in the Patparganj mart and lay encamped at Masuri.

[1]*S.P.D.*, XXIX, 126, 127.

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Some of the Sikh horsemen advanced up to the Bain of Shaikh Muhammad and plundered some camels and bullocks. They were attacked by Afzal Khan's horsemen who cut off the head of one Sikh while the rest took to flight.[1]

The Sikhs then marched up the east bank of the Jamuna and raided Kutana, Jhunjhuna and Budhana. Meanwhile Najib-ud-daulah had arrived near Delhi. On learning that the Sikhs were busy plundering, he said: "The Sikhs will now receive a good thrashing. They acquired much booty in (their) fight with Malhar Rao, and also got large sums from Jawahir Singh, so that they are heavily loaded. We ought to bar their path once more and do a splendid job."

"Accordingly Najib crossed at Ghat Kutana by night, and learnt at dawn that the Sikhs were halting 10 kms away from that place. Leaving his camp and baggage there, he set out after them. He had not gone 5 kms when the Sikhs came in sight and the fighting began. The Sikhs, ignorant of Najib's advance, had left their camp and gone out to plunder the villages (around). When the noise of riding and the roll of kettledrums reached them, every one of them in bewilderment hastened towards their camp. Najib also came up by rapid marching. The Sikhs advanced quickly. But the Rohillas arrived near their camp and the Sikhs were paralysed and could do nothing. Vast amounts of booty fell into the hands of Najib's men, including large numbers of camels, horses, and ponies laden with property and other good articles. Najib drove the Sikhs beating them, for 15 kms to the neighbourhood of Kandhala (30 kms south-east of Panipat). Many men were wounded. An arrow hit the notable Jamadar Sarbuland Khan Khanazad in the neck and it came out from the side of the throat ; but he remained alive. Many of the Sikhs were slain. After a long time a vast amount of spoils came from the hands of the Sikhs into the hands of the Rohilla army. In the end the Sikhs crossed the Jamuna and went away towards the places near their own administration."[2]

The Sikhs again fell plundering the districts of Najib-ud-daulah, to the west of the Jamuna. Najib gave them a hot pursuit, but

[1] *Delhi Chronicle*, 207; Nur-ud-din, 108a.

[2] Nur-ud-din, 108b-109b; *Delhi Chronicle*, 208. (The news of this fight chreaed Delhi on 22 April.)

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he was very much hard-pressed by them. In these engagements Amar Singh of Patiala had given considerable assistance to Najib-ud-daulah against the Sikhs. The Sikhs disturbed that Raja, fought with him and caused him great annoyance.[1]

The Sikhs ravage Najib's country, May, 1767

On May 11, 1767, Ahmad Shah Abdali gave leave to Najib-ud-daulah from the banks of the river Satluj in view of the weak state of his health. Just then the news arrived that the Sikhs, who a week ago had managed to give the Durrani troops the slip in passing by their camp, had entered Najib's country. They had first ravaged the Sarhind territory under the very eyes of the Abdali. Then leaving their families and effects in the jungle of Rohi of Bhatinda-Hissar region, had crossed the Jamuna at Buriya ghat. They had sacked Najib's districts of Saharanpur, Ambetah and Nanautah. Afterwards they directed their attention to the Barah Sadat settlement or a cluster of twelve Sayyid villages around Miranpur in Muzaffarnagar district. Then they stormed Meerut. G.R.C. Williams quotes from the diary of a contemporary relating to this invasion of the Sikhs: "Indeed this slave of God himself lost some property on the occasion; it was the very month of Shams-ud-din's marriage and Sheikh Allah Yar Khan, son of Muhammad Khan, attained the crown of martyrdom by the hands of the infidels."[2]

Najib at once approached Ahmad Shah and sought his assistance against the Sikhs. The Durrani ordered Jahan Khan to punish the Sikhs. The Afghan general, taking Najib's son Zabitah Khan with him, travelled by forced marches and reached Meerut, about 300 kms distant, in three days. The Sikhs got news of Jahan Khan's arrival an hour and a half in advance. Most of them immediately rushed back across the Jamuna. Those who remained behind were all killed, and their booty was seized. Another body of the Sikhs had reached the Ganga. On hearing the news of their pursuit by the Afghans and Rohillas they hurried back towards the Jamuna. They were overtaken between Shamli and Kairanah, two important towns on the western side of Muzaffarnagar district. The leader of the Sikhs was slain, Baghel Singh was wounded, and most of

[1] *S.P.D.*, XXIX, 133, 143.
[2] *Calcutta Review*,, LX, January, 1875, p. 27.

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them were killed. The rest fled away. Then, in the same manner, the Afghan detachment returned to the Shah's halting place in the course of seven days.[1]

Sikh invasion into the Ganga Doab, December, 1767—January, 1768

In December, 1767 the Sikhs again turned their attention towards the country of Najib-ud-daulah across the Jamuna. In the absence of Ahmad Shah Abdali they were determined to punish his plenipotentiary who had been responsible for so much bloodshed of their brethren. On the 19th December they arrived in the neighbourhood of Delhi. Najib-ud-daulah had every information about the whereabouts of the Sikhs and on their approach near the imperial capital issued instructions to Yaqub Ali Khan and other officers, *amils* and *faujdars* to protect the city from their depredations.

Then they crossed the Jamuna, and began to plunder the country, sparing very few towns, and desolated the town of Nanautah which was beginning to rise from its ruins.[2]

Meanwhile, brave old Najib-ud-daulah had moved from his headquarters and reached Kandhalah just beyond the north-western border of the Meerut district. He advanced to the north of Muzaffarnagar by forced marches and compelled the Sikhs to fall back before him on Nanautah. There the Sikhs made a bold stand, but were beaten and driven northward to Islamnagar, a Pathan colony in the Nakur tahsil of Saharanpur district. There they again stood up to oppose the Amir-ul-umra, and fought a hard battle.[3]

The contemporary chronicler pathetically laments the destruction of his five dwelling houses, the burning of his beloved library, and the loss of all sorts of odds and ends ; not one solitary pot or pan evaded the scrutiny of the invaders.[4]

A paper of intelligence dated the 13th January, 1768, from Bourpur, about 5 kms on the side of Berar (Jalalabad) gives a graphic description of this engagement: "*Harkarahs* brought

[1]Miskin present in the campaign says about 9,000 Sikhs were killed by Jahan Khan, obviously an exaggerated number. (*Tahmas Namah*,, 267-8); *C.P.C.*, II, 412; Nur-ud-din, 111-2.

[2]*Delhi Chronicle*, 214-5.

[3]G.R.C. Williams, *Calcutta Review*, 1875, p. 28.

[4]Ibid.

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advice that the Sikhs were hovering in detached bodies round the camp beyond the reach of cannon shot, and that they had posted a party on the Jalalabad road to intercept the convoys of grain. A detachment of the Afghans was ordered to reinforce the convoy, and after a smart skirmish part of it was brought safe to the camp. Immediate orders were issued by Najib-ud-daulah to get the artillery in readiness and prepare for battle. The necessary ablutions were hardly performed when advice was brought that the advance-guards were already engaged A heavy fire of artillery and small arms began and was maintained with great vigour. Najib-ud-daulah, mounted on an elephant, was present in the rear of the artillery, and the first line which bore the brunt of the battle, behaved with singular intrepidity. In the midst of this, the Sikhs found means by a feint to throw the line of artillery into some confusion and were advancing with great impetuosity when some timely assistance was given by Sayyid Muhammad Khan and a chosen body of the Afghans, and the Sikhs were repulsed with loss and confusion. Towards the close of the day Najib-ud-daulah ordered his troops to desist from the engagement but to stand armed and prepared against any unexpected movement of the enemy. Before break of day the Sikhs renewed the engagement with redoubled vigour, and advice was at the same time received that a convoy of grain from Daul was intercepted and seized. It was determined therefore that the camp should be transferred nearer to Jalalabad where there was a considerable quantity of grain. It was thought that by this means the dangers of conveyance would be avoided, the supplies of provisions secured and the hearts of the soldiers strengthened. Time will tell what their future operations will effect. The Sikhs are moving all round there in flying bodies. Several Sardars of distinction were killed and wounded in the battle."[1]

At last the Sikhs retreated to Saharanpur and finally retired by Raj Ghat. This was Najib-ud-daulah's last triumph. His declining powers could not successfully cope with the rising strength of the Sikhs, and henceforth raids from the Panjab became so frequent and so regular that the people of the Ganga Doab gave up all resistance, calmly submitting to their fate. "As regularly as the crops were cut, the border chieftains crossed

[1]*C.P.C.*, II, 776.

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over and levied blackmail from almost every village, in the most systematic manner. Their requisitions were termed *rakhi*, sometimes euphemistically *kambli*, *i.e.* 'blanket money.'[1] Each of them had a certain well-known beat or circle, so well-recognized and so clearly defined that it is not unusual for the peasantry at the present day to speak of some places being for instance, in Jode Singh's *patti*, others in Diwan Singh's or Himmat Singh's, and so on. The collections, of course, varied with the ability of the people to pay, averaging from two to five rupees a head. Two or three horsemen generally sufficed to collect them, for 2,000 or 3,000 more were never very far off. In case of delay about paying up, a handful of troops, each well-mounted and armed with a spear, sword and good matchlock, speedily appeared to accelerate the liquidation of the debt. Refusal was fatal."[2]

Najib admits himself beaten by the Sikhs, March, 1768

On the retirement of the Sikhs from the Ganga Doab to their own territories, Najib went to Aonla where he celebrated the marriage of his son Kalu Khan. The Sikhs finding him absorbed in these nuptial festivities, again spread in the *parganahs* of Karnal and Panipat and ravaged the imperial domains. Thereupon Najib moved from Aonla by forced marches, arrived at Delhi and then marched towards the Sikhs to exert himself to expel them. As usual he fought many battles with them, but was defeated. The Sikh leader Jai Singh recalled all the Sikh bands then in Bharatpur with Jawahir Singh to ravage Najib's lands.[3]

Having defeated Najib the Sikhs marched towards Delhi and menaced the imperial city, "committing hostilities and depredations in those very quarters." Musavi Khan, the King's agent, had scanty forces with him and possessed no sources to draw succour from, and was therefore not sufficiently strong either to defend the fort of Delhi or to undertake any expedition.[4]

[1]Each man seems to have been charged grain or money equal to the price of a blanket.

[2]G.R.C. Williams, *Calcutta Review*, 1875, pp. 28-9.

[3]He wrote: "What are you doing there? I have repeatedly written to you to chastise Najib, but you have not done it. So I have now come here. You join me from his kingdom." *S.P.D.*, XXIX, 143.

[4]*C.P.C.*, II, 835; Nur-ud-din, 113.

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Najib-ud-daulah was so much shaken in his determination and his utter weakness against the Sikhs unfolded itself in so glaring a manner before him, that he thought of seeking his political salvation by making a pilgrimage to Mecca or by retiring into some obscure retreat.[1] He openly confessed himself beaten in a letter addressed to the Queen-Mother of Shah Alam II, and recalled his agent Sultan Khan, troops and goods from Delhi, leaving the royal family and the city to their fate. Najib wrote to the Dowager Queen: "To this hour her servant has manifested unshaken loyalty to the House of Timur. And his services, however poor or inconsiderable, have yet been zealous and sincere. Hitherto he has preserved the Royal domains, and what he has been able to give, he has given. But now Her Majesty must forgive her servant and not expect what he has no ability to perform. The Sikhs have prevailed and they have written to all the tribes in general to join them, pointing to his weakness and encouraging them to cast him out. Her Majesty will consider him now as one unable to provide for his own security here. If, therefore, it meets with her august approbation and the proposal is thought practicable, her servant is ready to escort the whole Royal family to the Presence. There is still time enough left for the execution of this purpose. Moreover, on account of the engagements which subsist between Her Majesty and her servant, he will continue firm to her side while he has the power to do so; and when he has no power left, he will escort Her Majesty to the Presence of her son. He is ready to perform these conditions and would on no account have it said that he failed in them and turned his back in the day of trial."[2]

In another letter written nearly six months later, Najib-ud-daulah again admitted his inability to cope with the Sikhs. In a petition he wrote to the Emperor: "Until this hour I have manifested the firmest attachment and fidelity towards the young princes and Her Majesty the Begam. But now I am no longer able to continue that support to them which is necessary for their preservation. Let Your Majesty in your own Royal person advance to your capital and yourself defend your own honour. Your vassal ingenuously represents that he is not equal to the charge in his present situation."[3]

[1] *C.P.C.*, II, 847.
[2] ibid.
[3] ibid, 1101; *S.P.D.*, XXIX, 143.

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The sudden desertion of the capital by Najib deeply disturbed the mind of the Emperor, as we shall find from the perusal of the letter given in *C.P.C.*, II, 846. Moreover, it elevated the spirits of the Sikhs so highly that they now wanted to play the role of king-makers by offering to escort Shah Alam to the imperial capital. There was, however, no unanimity among the Sikh chiefs. As every one of them wished to be the king-maker, the Emperor firmly declined to give himself up to them. It will be clear from his letter written to Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, the chief leader of the Sikhs [*C.P.C.*, II, 849].

Najib again defeated by the Sikhs, December, 1768

A Marathi despatch dated the 30th December, 1768, written by Sadashiv Ballal to Vishvasrao Lakshman, says that Najib again fought with the Sikhs but was defeated.[1] This is the last battle fought between the Sikhs and Najib-ud-daulah before his death in 1770 which we have come across in the contemporary records.

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[1] *S.P.D.*, XXIX, 223.

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CHAPTER 5

Activities against Jats and Mughals, 1769—1775

Introductory

During the period treated of in these pages, the Sikhs who had given ample proof of their dynamic energies, concentrated their attention chiefly on two objects: (*i*) in fighting or quarrelling with the Mughals, the Marathas, the Jats, the Rohillas, the Nawab of Oudh, the English, the Durranis, the hill rajas, or their own co-religionists, and (*ii*) in plundering the people of the upper Ganga Doab, the Delhi province and parts of Rohilkhand.

In their previous war with the Mughals and the Durranis, the Sikhs were inspired by a sense of patriotism, with indignation at their outraged religion, and with a deep-rooted national loathing; and by 1769 they had effected the liberation of their mother-country.

Now they were impelled by some other motives. It was after nearly eight hundred years of subjection and slavery to foreign rule that the Sikhs had set themselves free from political bondage. Besides, they had beaten off Ahmad Shah Durrani, the greatest Asian general of his times. Naturally, their enthusiasm was great and their spirits high. They had won power, and so fascinating, so elevating and so enchanting did it appear to them, that they wished to display it, and this could best be done before their neighbours.

As regards plundering the Ganga Doāb and the Delhi province, these were the richest parts of the country, and were situated in the immediate neighbourhood of the Sikh territory. The Sikhs required money badly. They had become rulers in their own fatherland where they had lived for centuries as tillers of soil, hewers of wood and drawers of water. As lords of domains they had to inspire the minds of the subject people not only with their fighting capacity

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which they had already done, but also with their administrative ability, and brilliance of wealth and position. The Sikhs had to govern not only peasants and labourers but also rich bankers, wealthy merchants, mighty landlords and great nobles. It was, therefore, necessary for them to raise their standard of living and to provide themselves with the requisite paraphernalia of state. Revenue from their own lands was slow to come in, and extortion upon their own people they would never practise.

The psychological factor was equally responsible for such an undertaking. The delight of power, the exhibition of intrepidity and valour, the temptation of sudden wealth, always so attractive to daring persons who preferred the rich spoil won by the bravery of an hour, to that of drudgery of years; the gorgeous trappings, the lavish expenditure, the song, the festivity, the smiles of the fair and all the joyous life of liberty and good fellowship, operated with irresistible force on a warlike, energetic and imaginative people. With what cheerfulness a Sikh embraced an occasion to fight can be estimated from the following statement: "In spite of the simplicity of his habits, he took a pardonable pride in the adornment of his person and the proper maintenance of his accoutrements. Like the ancient Spartan, he never failed to carefully comb out and adjust his long hair and beard before the battle, and his white vest contrasting with his scarlet trappings made a fair show as he rode along gallantly to the fight."[1]

The Sikhs possessed the necessary qualifications to achieve success in such enterprises. They were bold and resolute, faultless rider and shot. They were indefatigable and could keep on horseback day and night, braving heat and cold, hunger and thirst. They knew every inch of the country, wood or water, hill or dale.

But it would be a great mistake to suppose that the Sikhs were stimulated in these pursuits only by a sense of pride and the greed of gold. This was as a matter of fact a natural stage in the evolution of the political power of the Sikhs, and it formed a transition between their territorial chieftainships and the Sikh monarchy.

Baghel Singh's fight with the Raja of Patiala, 1769

The Sikhs had tried the fortune of arms for nearly seventy years

[1] *Calcutta Review*, LX, 1875, p. 29.

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past, and would not give up plying their weapons even when no external foe existed. They greedily seized whatever opportunity was offered to them to display their military skill and warring zeal. Aggression on their neighbours, whether Sikhs or non-Sikhs, had become a matter of principle with them. No doubt the hostilities with their Hindu and Muslim neighbours offered them greater temptations on account of their riches; but when they were not occupied in such ventures, they were ready to pick up a quarrel with other Sikh chiefs. One of the most notable incidents of this kind that occurred in the year of 1769 is narrated here.

Raja Amar Singh of Patiala had seized various possessions of other Sikhs. Baghel Singh, the famous leader of Karorasinghia *Misl* had been deprived of various villages such as Lalru, Bhuni and Mullanpur. Baghel Singh prevailed upon other Sikh chiefs who had also suffered at the hands of the Patiala Raja, and in consequence Dulaha Singh, Sukho Singh, Bhag Singh, Bhanga Singh, Hari Singh and Gurbakhsh Singh made common cause with him. On the other hand Amar Singh was joined by various *sardars* including the Raja of Nahan. The armies met at Ghuram (23 kms. south of Patiala). The confederates fought well, but one section of the army under Sukho Singh gave way before the artillery fire of Amar Singh. In order to divert the attention of the Patiala army, some of Baghel Singh's men secretly appeared before the walls of Patiala and attacked the city. But the smart fire from the guns mounted on the walls of the fort drove them back. Baghel Singh thereupon left the field and commenced plundering the territory of the Raja. This proved effective in forcing Amar Singh to yield. His *vakil* Chain Singh waited upon Baghel Singh and asked him to make peace. An interview between the two chiefs was decided upon, and Raja Amar Singh visited Baghel Singh in his camp at Lahal village. Shortly after the Raja's arrival his eldest son came in. Baghel Singh took him in his lap, and at the Raja's request administered him baptism. The Raja served all the Sikhs present there with *karah prashad*, and granted *khilats* to Baghel Singh's companions. Thus the dispute was amicably settled.[1]

The Sikhs fight the Jat Ruler of Bharatpur, 24th February, 1770

The Sikhs had not been free from this embroil for long, when

[1]Ratan Singh, 540-50; Gian Singh, 898-906; *Raj Khalsa* ,II, 23.

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they received an invitation from their old caste-fellows of Bharatpur, and expecting a rich reward they readily accepted the offer.

On Jawahir Singh's death in June, 1768, his younger brother, Ratan Singh, succeeded him. He took into his service two Europeans, Rene Madec[1] and Walter Reinhard, known as Sombre or Samru. Samru's original name was Walter Reinhard. He was born in 1720 either at Salzburg or Strasburg in Germany. He came to India as a sailor on a French ship. He enlisted in the French army at Pondicherry as Summer, or Somers, which the soldiers changed into Sombre and Indians pronounced Samru. After some time he recruited himself in the East India Company's service in Bengal. He deserted in 18 days to M. Law at Chandernagore. Then he took service under Safdar Jang, the Nawab of Oudh. Afterwards he joined Siraj-ud-daulah's service. He served under Mir Qasim and commanded two battalions. He massacred 51 Englishmen and 100 others at Patna in October, 1763. Then he fled to the Nawab of Oudh. He served at Bharatpur under Jawahir Singh and later at Jaipur, where he was dismissed by the Raja on a remonstrance from the English. He was employed by Najaf Khan, the Delhi Wazir, and was granted a valuable estate at Sardhana in Meerut District. There he married a Muslim lady of remarkable beauty and ability known as Begam Samru. The Emperor's letter received by the Governor of Bengal on November 6, 1775, stated: "Samru's services to His Majesty were indispensable. He was deputed to punish the refractory Sikhs. But on the request of the English His Majesty dismissed him and never thought for a moment that the dismissal of this officer would affect the royal interest. The result is that the Sikhs have become more troublesome now than formerly." He died at Agra on 4th May, 1778.[2]

[1]Rene Madec was born at Quimper in Brittany in France in 1736. He came out to India as recruit in the service of the French East India a Company in 1748. He was captured by the British and served in the English army in Bengal. He escaped after several years, became a guerilla leader and pursued a brilliant career. He served under Shuja-ud-daulah, and after some time he went over to the Jats of Bharatpur. In 1772 he took service under the Mughal Emperor who conferred upon him many favours and honours. Afterwards he rejoined his countrymen at Pondicherry and fought against the English. He died in France in 1784. (Buckland, 269)

[2]Buckland, 372; Beale, 373; *C.P.C.*, IV, 2034.

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Ratan Singh was murdered by his Brahman priest, Gosain Rupanand, on the 8th April, 1769. Dan Shah, the commander-in-chief of the Jat forces became regent for Ratan Singh's young son Kesari Singh. The late ruler's brothers Nawal Singh and Ranjit Singh united to overthrow the Regent who was not of royal blood, but a Jat of ordinary descent. When Rene Madec, the principal supporter of Dan Shah, was away from the capital to quell disturbances, both the brothers expelled the regent-general from the territory of Bharatpur. But they fell out over the distribution of power. Nawal Singh cleverly won over Rene Madec and all the influential courtiers. Ranjit Singh fled to his fort of Kumbher. Nawal Singh attacked his brother and Ranjit Singh in exasperation invited the Sikh chiefs of the Cis-Satluj territory to his assistance. Nawal Singh sought help from the Marathas. Just at this time by mere accident, Mir Qasim, the deposed Nawab of Bengal, reached Agra. Samru was already with the Jats. The presence of all these hostile elements in one place raised strong apprehensions of a combined attack in the minds of the British Agents of the neighbourhood. They kept themselves in close touch with their movements. Hence full details of this expedition of the Sikhs are available purely from English sources. This material escaped even the great historian, Sir Jadunath Sarkar, who in his *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, iii, 6, makes only a passing reference to this event.

The Sikhs who had been in the habit of invading the country in the Doāb as well as in the vicinity of Delhi for several years past arrived near Panipat on the 4th January, 1770, plundering and ravaging the country as they went. This was the estate of Najib-ud-daulah who was lying ill at Delhi. His son, Zabita Khan, came to oppose them. The Sikhs demanded a large sum as the price of their friendship. Zabita Khan declined to entertain any such proposal. An engagement took place between the two ; but it decided nothing.[1]

The Sikhs advanced from Panipat plundering villages on their way, and reached the neighbourhood of Delhi on the 10th January. Zabita Khan closely followed them. No action was fought on the

[1]N. A. I., *Calendar of Records of the Select Committee at Fort William in Bengal*, from Captain Gabriel Harper, dated Amir Khan's Gardens, January 28, 1770, p. 98, paragraph, 259.

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way for want of reinforcements. On the 14th January they entered the Jat territory. Zabita Khan still maintained their pursuit. The Sikhs, finding that they could not give full play to their ambition, offered Zabita Khan a sum of a lakh of rupees "on the condition of his quitting the country about Delhi."[1]

No settlement was, however, arrived at. "The agreement betwixt Zubta Cawn and these chiefs is not fully adjusted and the former is as vigilant as ever well-knowing that no dependence can be placed on them."[2] The Sikhs did not cross the Jamuna into the Doāb as long as Zabita Khan was upon them; but when they had passed the Rohilla estate, he retired. The Sikhs thereupon entered the Doāb and encamped near Koil[3] (Aligarh).

Richard Barwell in a letter to Thomas Pearson, dated Calcutta, the 20th February, 1770, wrote about Delhi:

"The whole country about Delhi is up in arms: the Sikhs, Rohillas, Morattas are all in motion."[4]

On the 26th January a large body of the Jats was ordered by Nawal Singh to proceed towards Delhi to oppose the advance of the Sikhs.[5] The Sikhs marched with such rapidity that consternation was produced among the Jat population.[6] "Men are flying before them, and seeking places of retreat to secure them from the insult of those people so that country is left entirely at their mercy."[7]

[1]ibid, paragraphs, 260, 261, 269. Colonel P. Gailliez in a despatch, dated Allahabad, January 15, 1770, reported the arrival of Mir Qasim near Agra, hinting at the probability of an attack on Bengal. (ibid, paragraph, 262.)

The Governor of Fort William did not take a serious notice of this report: "The President states that the intelligence of Qasim Ali's preparation against the English has been confirmed and his treasures have induced certain formidable powers to declare in his favour. He, however, disbelieves the current rumour about the reported alliance of the Sikhs, the Mahrattas and Najib-ud-daulah. (ibid, paragraph, 266).

[2]N.A.I., *Bengal Select Committee*, February 16, 1770, pp. 55-7.

[3]ibid, Proceedings of February 17, 1770, pp. 76-8.

[4]*Bengal: Past and Present*, XI, part 1, July-September, 1915, p. 37.

[5]N.A.I., *Calendar of Records*, paragraph, 270. Captain Gabriel Harper from Faizabad reported: "It is apprehended that there will be a junction of the Mahrattas with the Sikhs whose march to the gates of Allahabad can only be prevented by an English army. The retreat of Abdalla's (Ahmad Shah Abdali) army to Kandahar has left the field open to these formidable armies." ibid.

[6]ibid.

[7]ibid, *Bengal Select Committee*, February 16, 1770, p. 70.

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At these alarming news the Jat force advancing to meet the Sikhs was so much frightened that it retreated the following day without even sighting the enemy.[1] The Sikhs then reached Chunar, 748 kms from Delhi, and 32 kms before Mughal Sarai.

Mir Qasim and a body of 5,000 troops that lay encamped at Kalpi marched to the fort of Moot (?) near "Supay Ka Racher" [?] near Gwalior where Marathas were assembling from all parts. At this place Samru presented Mir Qasim with 7 lakhs of rupees, some elephants and tents. Samru went to the fort of Chunar where the Sikh army was halting. He promised Mir Qasim to return in 15 days, when Ghazi-ud-din was expected to join him.[14] The Governor of Fort William in consequence ordered the Commanding Officer of the third Brigade to move without any delay to Karamnash and there to hold the troops in readiness to march on the shortest warning.

On the 16th February, 1770, the Nawab Wazir of Oudh's letter was received by the Governor of Bengal saying:

"Mir Qasim has nefarious projects in his mind, and after uniting the Sikhs and Marathas in his cause, he proposes to invade Bengal."

On the 17th February the Governor wrote in reply:

"Agrees with the addressee that Mir Qasim is not yet an object of dread. His followers whom he has bought with money, are not sincerely attached to him, and it is certain that they will not remain with him longer than his money lasts."[2] To this place came Samru on the 8th February to bring about peace between the Jats and the Sikhs, and to use these forces in the cause of Mir Qasim[15] against the British Government. Nawal Singh's agent also came to the Sikhs and commenced peace parleys, which after a forthnight's idle conference for an amicable settlement ended in smoke. The Sikhs therefore broke up their camp, and returned to their former encampment near Aligarh. A Jat force followed them. The Sikhs started plundering the Jat villages within sight of the Jat forces which were following them.

[1]ibid. *Calendar of Records* paragraph, 275.

[2]ibid, paragraph, 284, dated Gohad, February 7, 1770; *Bengal Select Committee*, March 13, 1770, p. 100.

Karamnash is a small river about 4 kms from Mughal Sarai on the border of U.P. and Bihar. The town Karamnash is situated about 32 kms from Mughal Sarai. There is a railway station of the same name where the railway line crosses this river.

[3]*C.P.C.*, III, 79, 81.

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The Jat army in pursuit of the Sikhs was divided into three parts. Their advance-guard was under the charge of Rene Madec and Gopal Rao Maratha. It consisted of six companies of light horse and two pieces of cannon, one four and the other two pounder. Their main body under Nawal Singh was 6 kms distant and the rear-guard still backward. The Sikhs finding the Jat advance-guard almost at their heels and separated from their main body, fell on it with their full force of 20,000. The French and Maratha generals knowing that retreat was impossible as they had been surrounded on all sides, got ready to fight. A fierce engagement commenced at 9 o'clock in the morning on the 24th February. This day's report stated:—"The Jats are divided into two parties. One party is treating with the Sikhs with the object of exterminating the Maharattas and the other is entreating the Maharattas to make war on the Sikhs. The Sikhs are receiving money from both parties. On the 24th the Sikhs were in camp on the outskirts of the Jat country."[1] The Jats and Marathas fought with the Sikhs "with surprising intrepidity as long as they had munitions." The Maratha cavalry was almost destroyed and Gopal Rao being wounded with a musket shot was disabled for further action. Madec's men suddenly retreated and took shelter in a village behind them. The Sikhs besieged the village on all sides. At this moment one thousand musketeers and some cavalry of the main body came to the rescue of the vanguard. The battle again began with the same fury as in the morning, and it continued till 4 o'clock in the afternoon. This time Madec suffered heavily, "the French Chief's party having almost perished, all horses killed or catched by the Sikhs." The Sikhs also gained one piece of cannon. The remnant of the Jat force was in a desperate situation both inside and outside the village. Just then the whole of the Jat army arrived on the scene. The Sikhs immediately raised the siege and took to flight. The Jat forces pursued them for 15 kms, and captured "some baggage and animals, etc., abandoned by the Sikhs on their route and by this way a complete victory had been obtained by the Jats."

In this attack almost all the Jat chiefs were wounded with the exception of "the French Chief with one or two of his Europeans" —, and "of six companies not three entire returned." On the side

[1] *C.P.C.*, III,129.

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of the Sikhs, "their general was wounded, two principal chiefs were slain, two other *Sardars* together with a great part of their detachments" were wounded; but "their killed found on the field of battle are not numerous." The total loss of the Jats "perhaps amounts to four or five hundred killed and wounded more than the double the enemy left in the field."

The eminent writer, Father Perre Wendel, the French missionary at Agra who supplied all these details of this battle, pays a tribute to the bravery of Gopal Rao and Rene Madec. "It must be confessed both chiefs behaved them with extraordinary courage and the whole Seik forces so long a time upon them they had the fortune to make a defence almost thought impossible being also much certain that they behaved too bold and inconsiderate to expose themselves to such unavoidable a danger to perish all without the least hope of recovery. They gained themselves great reputation, it is true, and the Jauts being themselves now almost delivered of those plunderers must attribute the whole success to the personal bravery and intrepidity unparalleled of those chiefs, none of the other have contributed anything to the obtained advantage which notwithstanding was a pure hazard, Nawal Singh not being of resolution to attack the Seiks."

The great missionary does equal justice to the Sikhs, when he says that "they sustained the attack more vigorously than could be expected from a party of robbers. A party jumped from their horses, combating with firearms and making good discharge by platoons reforcing and retiring as they thought proper having such a prodigious number for their supply."

The Sikhs fled late in the evening, and continued retreating the whole night and the following day, and halted at a distance of thirty *kos* (90 kms). They again retired to the Jat dominion in the neighbourhood of Delhi and started ravaging the country.[1]

The Governor of Bengal wrote on the 24th February, 1770, to Qundi Khan, a cousin of Hafiz Rahmat Khan and the father-in-law of Najib-ud-daulah:

"It is necessary for the well-being of Hindustan that the Sikhs should not be allowed to cross the frontier of Sirhind nor the Marathas the river Narbada. To admit these people into the heart

[1]F.P. Wendel's letter dated at Agra, March 3, 1770; N.A.I., *Bengal Select Committee*, March 28, 1770, pp. 120-4; *C.P.C.*, III, 129; *S.P.D.*, XXIX, 259.

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of Hindustan would be to cherish a snake in one's bosom. It is better to awake to the danger before it is too late."

Plunder of Panipat District, November-December, 1770

After the expedition into the Jat country the Sikhs spent their time in managing their own domestic affairs until their attention was called to Delhi where a favourable situation had arisen for them. Amir-ul-Umara Najib-ud-daulah, the Mir Bakhshi of the Mughal Empire, who had been in supreme charge for many years past not only of the imperial capital, but also of the Emperor's mother and the Crown-prince during Shah Alam II's absence, died on 31st October, 1770. Vansittart, earlier Governor of Bengal, wrote about him in a despatch to the Court of Directors on the 28th March, 1768: "He is the only example in Hindostan of at once a great and a good character. He raised himself from the command of fifty horse to his present grandeur, entirely by his superior valour, integrity, and strength of mind. Experience and abilities have supplied the want of letters and education, and the native nobleness and goodness of his heart have amply made amends for the defect of his birth and family. He is now about sixty years of age, borne down by fatigue and sickness."

The Nawab Wazir of Oudh while intimating Najib-ud-daulah's death to the Governor of Bengal wrote:

"Najib-ud-daulah who was a *Sardar* of character, sense, and much penetration has died."

Francklin in his *Shah Aulum*, on p. 33, writes about him thus:

"Najeeb Al Dowla, who had been placed at the head of the administration at Delhi, continued in that situation with great credit to himself and benefit to the state. An able politician, a valorous soldier, and pleasant and affable in his manners and demeanour, he gained the confidence of the Delhians, and his influence was found sufficient to uphold the royal authority which is still retained."

Zabita Khan, his eldest son, succeeded to his estates situated mostly in the upper Ganga Doāb in Saharanpur, Muzaffarnagar and Meerut districts, in the northern part of Rohilkhand especially in Najibabad district and in the district of Panipat.

[1] *C.P.C.*, III, 94, 473; Keene, *Fall of the Moghul Empire*, 91-2.

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No sooner was the news of the removal of the strong hand of Najib-ud-daulah known to the Sikhs than they carried several plundering raids into the neighbouring district of Panipat. The Sikh attacks on Zabita Khan's territory and the impending danger from the Marathas had a great effect on the Rohillas in as much as it "united the family of Najib-ud-daulah."[1]

This tract in which were situated the cities of Sonepat, Panipat and Karnal had become a prey to complete anarchy in the third quarter of the eighteenth century. It formed a sort of no-man's land between the Sikh and Maratha powers, coveted by both but protected by neither. It fell a victim to every freebooter who happened to come that way.[2]

Mughal Ali Khan, the Governor designate of Sarhind, is defeated, April-May, 1772

The Sikhs again remained busy for about a year or so in setting their own house in order, in developing agriculture and trade in their respective territories, and also in maintaining their martial spirit by engaging in petty disputes with other Sikh chiefs. Then suddenly an occasion offered itself to give them a chance of winning military renown and glory.

Mughal Ali Khan, *alias* Nasir-ul-Mulk, was the third son of Asaf Jah Nizam-ul-Mulk of Hyderabad (Deccan). Being disappointed with the treatment of his brothers, he left the Deccan, and stayed with Shah Alam II at Allahabad. He came to Delhi in the train of the Emperor. On the 4th April, 1772 he was appointed Governor of Sarhind and granted a *khilat* of six pieces. The Marathas supplied him with 1,000 troops; while Dilawar Ali Khan Afghan, Shaikh Muhammad Hayat, Shaikh Kabir and Jiwan Khan joined him with 6,000 horse and foot. Mughal Ali thus commanded a total force of 19,000 horse and foot. Marching through the Doāb he encamped at Thana Bhawan near Ghausgarh where he plundered the merchants and bankers of the neighbourhood. He crossed the Jamuna and halted on the other side of the river for two days. At this place he was attacked by a body of six hundred Sikh horse, who shortly afterwards took to flight. He was joined by Daler Khan, son of Najabat Khan, the ruler of Kunjpura, with

[1] *C.P.C.*, III, 469; Hamilton's *Rohilla Afghans*, 166; N.A.I., *Bengal Select Committee*, December 29, 1770, pp. 212, 803.

[2] *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Punjab, I, 303.

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500 horse. Near Kunjpura he was attacked by Sahib Singh, Dyal Singh, Dana Singh and Laja Singh with 6,000 horse. Severe fighting continued the whole day in which about 500 men were killed on both sides. In the darkness of the night Mughal Ali Khan and Daler Khan repaired to the fort. The Sikhs immediately besieged them. Hostilities continued for thirteen days. On the 14th day the Mughal soldiers were defeated, and Daler Khan advised Mughal Ali to retire to Delhi. In a few days Mughal Ali Khan managed to sail in a boat down the Jamuna and reached Delhi safely.[1]

Janko Rao's arrival in Karnal District, c. October, 1772

Mughal Ali's defeat was a great offence given by the Sikhs directly to the Mughal Emperor. The easy-going and pleasure-seeking Court of Delhi swallowed the bitter pill without showing any sign of their displeasure. But the success of the Sikhs alarmed Janko Rao, the Maratha Chief, stationed at the capital. At the head of a strong force he marched from Delhi into Panipat and Karnal districts.

His movements caused consternation among the Sikh chiefs of the Cis-Satluj. They believed that the Maratha chief was coming to punish them. Raja Amar Singh was so much frightened that he removed his treasures from Patiala to Bhatinda for the sake of safety.

The Maratha general, however, showed no signs of hostility, and did not advance farther than Pehowa, a place of pilgrimage situated beyond Thanesar on the banks of the sacred Sarasvati river. The purpose of his visit apparently seems due partly to a religious bath in the holy stream and partly to find out if the Sikhs were up to any other mischief. His return to the capital after a short while gave a sigh of relief to the Sikh chiefs of the neighbourhood.[2]

Invasion of the Ganga Doab, November-December, 1773

The minds of the Sikhs were still inspired by the Mughal Empire, though it had become quite hollow and rotten to the core by this time. The Sikhs carefully watched the reaction of

[1] *Delhi Chronicle*, 247; *Tarikh-e-Muzaffari*, 189b-190b; Bakhtmal, 108; A Marathi letter dated December 11, 1780, states that hitherto Mughal Ali Khan was in Delbi, but then he left for Afghanistan to secure the favour of Timur Shah Durrani. (*Dilliyethil*, I, 21.)

[2] *The Rajas of the Punjab*, 38.

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the Mughal Court to their audacity for having expelled Mughal Ali Khan. The failure of the Government in taking any notice of its discomfiture emboldened them, and after about a year they directed their attention to the upper Ganga Doāb.

The area affected by the Sikh inroads comprised the territory lying between the Ganga and the Jamuna bounded in the north by the Shiwalik mountains and extending as far south as the district of Bulandshahar. The district of Saharanpur suffered the most, as compared with the districts of Muzaffarnagar, Meerut and Bulandshahar. The intensity of the Sikh invasions slightly decreased as they went down farther south.[1]

Their method of plundering is described by the eyewitness Francklin thus: "Inured from their infancy to the hardships of the military life, the Seiks are addicted to predatory warfare, in a manner peculiar to themselves alone. When determined to invade a neighbouring province, they assemble at first in small numbers on the frontier, when having first demanded the '*rakī*' or tribute, if it be complied with, they retire peaceably; but when this is denied, hostilities commence, and the Seiks, in their progress are accustomed to lay waste the country on all sides carrying along with them as many of the inhabitants as they can take prisoners, and all the cattle. The prisoners are detained as slaves, unless redeemed by a pecuniary compensation."[2]

In the beginning the people were so terrified that they would desert their hearths and homes all along the route to be followed and would seek shelter in fortified places or in remote and out-of-the-way villages. The places of refuge in many cases were simple enclosures with brick walls and round towers in the corners. In large towns and cities strong fortresses had been erected. For instance at Deoband Najib-ud-daulah's officer named Hasan Khan built a citadel; and his successor Taza Beg Khan surrounded the city with a rampart and a ditch. At Lakhnauti opposite Karnal on the eastern side of the Jamuna a fort erected for this purpose still exists. Another fort was built at Sidhauli (16 kms south of Saharanpur) by Hari Gujar. His relative Raja Ram Dyal Singh, head of the Landhaurah family, fortified Jabarherah near Rurki with a deep ditch, a mud wall and brick towers. Najib-ud-daulah himself plan-

[1]Keene, *Hindustan under Free Lances*, 36.
[2]Francklin, 76-7.

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ned an entrenched camp at Ghausgarh surrounded by the fortresses of Jalalabad, Lohari and Thana Bhawan, which formed the three corners of a triangle in the centre of which stood Ghausgarh.

In the countryside the people "began the construction of those mud forts which are so characteristic of the state of insecurity of, indeed, nearly the whole Duab during the latter half of the last century."[1]

These fortifications did not prove a great barrier in the way of Sikh designs. The Sikhs came, fought, defeated the garrisons and plundered the people.[2] Their regular successes broke all resistance on the part of the people. They clearly realized that a frank, confident and good-humoured surrender not only prevented any bad treatment but secured even civility during the disagreeable operation. Pistols and sabres were after all a poor defence compared to civil words. Why should a man, because he lost a few rupees, lose also his presence of mind or temper or life. So they quietly resigned themselves to yielding to the inevitable. The Sikhs were not without a certain magnanimity. They gave up the practice of plundering the people and considered the territories as their protectorates, realizing their protection charges twice a year at the end of each harvest.[3]

The Sikh irruption into the upper Doab took place in the cold weather of 1775. A large body of Sikhs under the leadership of Karam Singh Shahid overran a large area. This territory belonged to Zabita Khan Rohilla, who being paralysed did not stir out of his fortress of Ghausgarh. They sacked Nanautah on the 11th December, 1773, "when the annalist of the misfortunes of that ill-starred place was unlucky enough to be robbed of fifteen maunds of grain not to speak of many other unconsidered trifles."[4]

Jalalabad was pillaged next. Ratan Singh states that the attention of the Sikhs was drawn to this place by a Brahman who complained that his married daughter had been forcibly seized by Sayyid Hasan Khan, the chief of the place. The Sikhs punished the whole village. The people who resisted them were beheaded:

[1] *Calcutta Review*, LX, 1875, pp. 30-31; *Haqiqat*, 37; *Muzaffarnagar District Gazetteer*, 177.

[2] At the time of harvests in May and October-November, a Sikh soldier as a rule carried one blanket for use at night. In the beginning of their raids, the Sikhs demanded from their victims either a blanket or money worth a blanket. Hence the black-mail came to be known as Kambli.

[3] *Calcutta Review*, LX, 1875, pp. 28-9.

[4] ibid, 31.

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while only those were spared who by holding grass in their mouths submitted to them. The chief was tied to a cot, and by being wrapped in straw was burnt alive. His agent, a Hindu Kalal, who helped the Sayyid by informing him of beautiful girls of the place was hanged. The Brahman's daughter was made over to her husband, and the food cooked by the girl was served to all the noted Brahmans of her husband's village. The Sikhs provided the husband with a good sum of money in order to assure good treatment for the girl.[1]

Sikh disturbances near Delhi, May-June, 1774

Plundering the Doāb on their way the Sikhs appeared early in 1774 in the royal domain near Delhi. The Mughal court could not summon up courage to oppose them, and the Sikhs advanced to the suburbs of the capital. On the 18th January, 1774, "the Sikhs devastated Shahdara till midnight, and departed with fifty boys when there still remained an hour and a half of night."[2] Side by side the Gujars inhabiting the country from Wazirabad, a small village on the banks of the Jamuna, a little above Delhi, extending as far as Sohna, consisting of *parganahs* Palam, Najafgarh, Badshahpur. Faridabad and Palee Pakul[3](?), also carried on their nefarious business of robbing the people the whole night. The Emperor decided to buy them off. He invited the Sikhs to enter his service with a body of 10,000 horse and offered to allot to them the district of Shahbazpur for their support. He also sent *khilats* for the Sikh chiefs.

Abdul Ahad Khan Majd-ud-daulah

This proposal had not yet materialised when Abdul Ahad Khan, a leading noble in the confidence of the King appeared on the scene. He was a Kashmiri Musalman. He was a man of handsome appearance, polished manners, dignified bearing, sweet tongue and bewitching looks. He thus possessed a fascinating personality. He was an adept in the art of flattery. Nature had endowed him with all the necessary qualifications which go to make a successful intriguer and courtier. He was therefore a favourite with kings,

[1]Ratan Singh, 550-54; *Shamshir Khalsa*, 111-12; *Raj Khalsa*, I, 37; Miskin, 291.

[2]*Delhi Chronicle*, 273.

[3]Hamilton, I, 409.

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queens and princes. But he was neither a soldier nor a statesman, and he was a hopeless failure both in war and politics. "Abdul Ahid Khan—or Majad-ud-Daula was a fop, very delicate in his habits, and a curiosity-seeker in the way of food and physic. It is said by the natives that he always had his table-rice from Kashmir, and knew by the taste whether it was from the right field or not.[1]"

Abdul Ahad Khan started his public career under the famous Najib-ud-daulah, the Dictator of Delhi. He posted him in the imperial capital and assigned to him the task of conveying messages from him to the Queen-Mother and the Crown-Prince, who had been living in Delhi during the period of Shah Alam II's exile (1759-1771). In September, 1769, he carried messages from these two great personages to the Emperor at Allahabad, and in April, 1770, he served as Najib-ud-daulah's ambassador to the Marathas in the Doāb. On the 19th November, 1771, he conveyed presents from Zabita Khan, the deceased Najib-ud-daulah's son, to the Emperor, then on his way to Delhi. During Zabita Khan's fight with the Emperor, he was on the side of the former; but on the 30th March, 1772, he managed to secure pardon from the King, and came to Delhi. He remained in the Court for a year unemployed: but he soon acquired a soft corner in the Emperor's heart for himself. He won over Mirza Najaf Khan, the grand Wazir of the Empire, who appointed him deputy-Wazir with the title of Majd-ud-daulah Bahram Jang on the 20th May, 1773. Shortly afterwards he was also given the office of the second Paymaster General on the 5th June, 1773. As the first Paymaster General, Zabita Khan, was generally absent from the court, Abdul Ahad served in the capacity of *Mir Bakhshi*.

Finding himself installed in these high offices, and enjoying the Emperor's confidence at the same time, his ambition and treachery led him to work against the instrument of his rise, Najaf Khan, with the object of gaining the highest office of the Wazir of the Empire.[2]

Abdul Ahad Khan obtained for himself the *faujdari* of Sarhind in the name of Prince Farkhunda Bakht and appointed Samru his deputy. Samru's appointment had been made for two considera-

[1]Keene, *Fall of the Moghul Empire*, 133.

[2]Munna Lal, 148-9; Khair-ud-din, I, 229, 243-4; *Siyar*, III, 85, 86, 88, 110, 111; Sarkar, III ,88-90.

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tions. The Emperor wanted to prevent him from joining other rebels and he was thought the best fitted person to punish the Sikhs. Samru was granted rescripts for the districts of Sonepat and Panipat, and was authorised to possess himself of whatever territory he could wrest from the Sikhs, in particular from Gajpat Singh of Jind, whose territory lay quite adjacent to the districts under his charge.

Samru took charge of his post early in July at the head of nearly 2,000 soldiers, some of whom were Europeans, with five pieces of cannon, a considerable quantity of ammunition and six elephants. He garrisoned Gharaunda which had been evacuated by the Sikhs who assembled at Karnal. The Sikhs hovered about Samru's camp, and gave him the greatest trouble. In an open engagement he was defeated. Samru maintained a precarious position until September, 1774, when he resigned his post. He wrote to Abdul Ahad Khan that from the territories granted to him for the support of his troops he could realize Rs. 5,000 from Panipat, Rs. 3,000 from Samalkha and a little sum from Gharaunda. This sum was inadequate to meet his expenses. The civil and military officers appointed by him in charge of various districts had been paid Rs.6,000 from his personal fund. He requested him to send some one to take charge of them.[1] Just about this time upon repuest from the Governor of Bengal, Samru was dismissed from the service by the Emperor.[2]

Abdul Ahad fails to win over the Sikhs

In October, 1774, Abdul Ahad Khan again entered into negotiations with the Sikh chiefs with a view to secure immunity for the royal domain from their depredations. He wrote to "Ray Singh Bahadur, Bag Singh Bahadur, Dulja Singh Bahadur, Diwan Singh Bahadur, Sahib Singh Bahadur and Sunder Singh Bahadur" to enter the imperial service. Each *Sardar* was to have 1,000 horse and 500 foot with him. Each horseman was to receive a salary of Rs. 30 per mensem and a foot soldier of Rs. 5. The chiefs were to receive *khilats* and *parganahs* for their support. These negotiations came to nothing, while the Sikh army was "hovering in the neighbourhood of Shahjahanabad."[3]

[1] *C.P.C.*, IV, 1026, 1097, 1152, 1184, 1195- 1298, 1362.
[2] ibid, 2034.
[3] ibid, 1359, 1538.

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The Emperor tried to secure assistance from the Nawab Wazir of Oudh: but the new Nawab, Asaf-ud-daulah, was so weak that he felt it extremely difficult even to guard his own dominions.[1]

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[1]ibid, 2058.

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CHAPTER 6

Devastation of Crownlands and the Capital

Najaf Khan, the prince minister of the Empire

At the time of the death of Najib-ud-daulah, Emperor Shah Alam II was at Allahabad. He sent to Najib's eldest son, Zabita Khan, condolences, a robe of investiture for the office of *Mir Bakhshi*, and the title of *Amir-ul-Umara*; and invited him to escort him to Delhi.[1] The raw youth declined the last part of the offer. The Emperor secured the Maratha assistance, and entered Delhi on the 6th January, 1772. Here he again invited Zabita Khan to attend the coronation and pay tribute; but he remained as adamant as ever. The Emperor therefore gave this post to Najaf Khan who came of a noble family of Iran. He was born at Isfahān in 1737. He came to India as a boy with his sister Khadijah Begam who was married to the eldest brother of Safdar Jang, the Delhi Wazir from 1748 to 1753, and the second Nawab of Oudh. In 1761 he took service under Mir Qasim, the Nawab of Bengal, and went over to the English in 1765. So valuable were his services to his new masters that in August, 1765, Clive granted him a pension of two lakhs of rupees a year. In 1771 he followed Shah Alam II from Allahabad to Delhi, where he soon rose to the highest position in the Empire.

In military capacity, political insight and humanity he had no equal "among the peerage of Delhi or the vassal princes of the Empire in his own day." As a successful politician he stood unrivalled. "In the correctness of his vision into the future he had no rival among his peers. To these virtues were added his marvellous self-control, calmness, patience, and moderation."

[1] *C.P.C.*, III, 480.

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Jonathan Scott, ii, 272, thus describes the character of Najaf Khan, "Najaf Khan possessed great personal courage and a fortitude and presence of mind not to be overcome by the greatest distress, or the most sudden misfortune. His affability of manners was such, as to charm even hunger to be patient in his service, and overcome mutinous resolutions of his troops, often driven to extreme necessity for want of regular pay. He was once, after the reduction of a capital fortress from the Jats (from which his army had hoped to receive the advantage of a liquidation of their long arrears), seized upon by the troops, menaced with death, and exposed bare-headed for a whole day to the sun, in the hottest season of Hindustan; a most severe punishment. But this, and the apprehensions of immediate death, did not move the calmness of his mind. He soothed the most morose of the mutineers with his eloquence, and diverted them from their purpose by his humorous remarks upon his own situation and their conduct; till, at length, they were contented with a part of their demands, and continued to serve him in hopes of better times. It is said that no person ever went away dissatisfied from Najaf Khan who, if he could not grant a request, would convince the petitioner of his sorrow at his being obliged to refuse it. His expenses always exceeded his income, and this obliged him to mortgage his revenues in assignment to the officers of his army for pay; so that his country was never completely settled under his own control, but always passing from one chief to another, who made his own settlement with the farmers. As he never refused offers of service from any military adventurers, this evil continually increased, and he did not live long enough after his conquests to correct the abuse by a settled form of government, and a reduction of force adequate to his finances. It is probable, had Najaf Khan been placed at the head of an established government, he would have been an amiable and great prince; and in the situation he filled, his character draws admiration, when his disadvantages are literally considered."[1]

The Emperor decided to punish Zabita Khan for his open defiance. In a campaign led by the Emperor, Najaf Khan and the Marathas, the Rohillas were defeated, and Zabita Khan sought safety in flight. He sued for peace and the Emperor restored his estates in Saharanpur, Meerut and Najibabad. A little later through the

[1]Sarkar, III, 39-44.

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intercession of the Marathas the office of *Mir Bakhshi* was again conferred upon him, and Najaf Khan was made Prime Minister.

Abdul Ahad Khan, the confidant of the King and the second *Mir Bakhshi* of the Empire and an irreconcilable opponent of Najaf Khan, invited Zabita Khan to Delhi, and tried to induce him to unite all the Afghans under him in order to overthrow Najaf Khan. Zabita Khan knew his own weak resources, and declined the offer. The omnipotent pet of the Emperor grew furious and resolved to ruin him.

Zabita Khan incites the Sikhs to plunder crownlands, April-July, 1775

Just at this time another catastrophe fell upon Zabita Khan. The peace parleys between the Sikh chiefs and Abdul Ahad Khan had broken down. The Sikhs before retiring to their homes on the approach of the rainy season as was customary with them wanted to secure valuable booty. No other region except the Ganga Doab which was esteemed one of the most productive territories in the empire could provide them a more suitable field.

The Sikhs gathered their forces near Karnal, and organised them into three big divisions under the leadership of Rae Singh Bhangi, Tara Singh Ghaiba Dallewalia and Baghel Singh Karorasinghia. They crossed the Jamuna by the Begi Ghat a little above Kunjpura on the 22nd April, 1775.[1] Zabita Khan was so much terrified that he immediately retreated from Garhi Duhtar also known as Garhi Mian Bhai Khan (40 kms north-west of Muzaffarnagar) to his fortified place, Ghausgarh (30 kms north-west of Muzaffarnagar). The Turkomans of Lakhnauti (3 kms east of the Jamuna) were the first to bear the brunt. Gangoh (6 kms east of Lakhnauti) was attacked next, and a tribute of Rs. 60,000 was realized from the inhabitants. A Sikh contingent visited Ambehta (11 kms north of Gangoh), and demanded Rs. 5,000. The *faujdar* could extract from the people only Rs. 2,000 and strangely enough the Sikhs accepted this sum and retired. Then came the turn of Nanautah (17 kms south-east of Gangoh) a great part of which

[1]The assemblage of Sikh forces had attracted the notice of the British Government:

"The Seiks have marched against Zabuita Chan, who is joined by some troops of the King. His own troops are very cool in his cause as he pays badly." *N.A.I.*, Secret Proceedings, April 20, 1775, p. 221, Paper of news transmitted by Colonel Gailleiz.

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was burnt to the ground, and where the chronicler "bemoans the loss of his pots and pans." Afterwards they besieged Deoband (21 kms east of Nanautah). Taza Beg Khan, the officer of the place, shut the gates of the town and resisted all the attempts of the invaders to take it by assault. Being deficient in artillery the Sikhs resorted to mining and entered the town. "Irritated at his obstinate resistance, they vented their spleen upon the commandant with savage cruelty. His limbs were swathed in cotton well steeped in oil, and fire being applied to the covering he was carefully roasted to death." The warlike Afghans could not be intimidated so easily and they started a hand-to-hand street fighting which continued for fourteen days. The people then gave in. They immediately paid a sum of Rs. 12,000 and submitted to the victors. Deoband[1] fell to the share of Rae Singh Bhangi who fixed an annual tribute of Rs. 600 on the inhabitants. The Usmani Shaikhs have a family tradition that Qalandar Bakhsh, a pretty boy 8 or 9 years old, was captured by Rae Singh and converted to Sikhism. The child's maternal grandfather, who was the spiritual guide of the Nawab of Kunjpura, procured his release by a large sum of money.

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From Deoband the Sikhs turned to Ghausgarh (22 kms south-west), the headquarters of Zabita Khan. The Nawab realizing the futility of resistance bought them off by paying Rs. 50,000, and entered into a friendly alliance with them against Shah Alam II:— "Abandoned by a court to which he had never owed much at any time and completely at the mercy of the Sikhs, he finally determined upon carrying out a bold project which, I have observed, there is reason to believe he had long cherished at heart, and, forming an alliance with his truculent neighbours, reasserted his independence of the Emperor Shah Alum, a master for whom real regard and respect were both equally impossible."[2]

The Sikhs left Ghausgarh, and marched southward to Delhi. Zabita Khan accompanied them in order to let loose the Sikhs on the royal domain. On the way the Sikhs plundered Barah Sādāt villages such as Miranpur and Kaithorah. They ravaged Shamli, Kairana, Kandhla and Meerut, and recrossed the Jamuna proba-

[1]Deoband is situated on the Saharanpur-Muzaffarnagar railway line 35 kms from the former and 24 kms from the latter. It possessed one of the biggest Muslim seminaries for the training of theologians.

[2]*Calcutta Review*, LX, 1875, p. 33; *Saharanpur District Gazetteer*, 192.

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bly at the Kutana Ghat. They swept through the crownlands up to the close neighbourhood of Delhi. A letter dated the 30th April, 1775 states:"The Sikhs headed by Zabita Khan are creating disturbances near the capital (Delhi) while the Marathas on the other side of the Jamuna are a source of anxiety to Nawab Asaf-ud-daulah. As the interests of the Nawab and the Governor-General are identical, it is necessary that the latter should try to quell the disturbances before it is too late."[1]

The Sikhs continued their depredations for more than three months.[2] "On the 15th July, 1775, the Sikhs set on fire and destroyed Paharganj and Jaisinghpura." The imperial troops offered some resistance, and about sixty persons were killed on both sides. Zabita Khan penetrated "as far south as Khurja, laid the whole country waste; but was finally defeated by Najaf Khan at Meerut and the Sikhs were compelled to return to their homes." They crossed over the Jamuna between Sonepat and Panipat on the 24th July, 1775.[3]

The Imperial Commander, Abul Qasim, is slain by Zabita Khan and the Sikhs, 11th March, 1776

It was in July, 1775 that the Sikhs had returned home after their exploits in the Doab. Abdul Ahad Khan who had felt very much exasperated at the recent lawless activities of Zabita Khan matured his plans for punishing this refractory chief. As soon as the rains were over he induced the Emperor to send an expedition against him. He placed his brother, Abul Qasim Khan, in charge of the imperial force, and in spite of the latter's protests he appointed him *faujdar* of the Saharanpur District in October, 1775. He was provided with a body of Mughalia troops and two battalions of trained sepoys commanded by Gangaram and Bhawani Singh. Abul Qasim at the time of his leaving Delhi remarked : "My brother is sending me to my death."

Abul Qasim advanced into the upper Doab without any opposition. The Rohillas withdrew before him, and he easily seized Meerut and several other forts. Abul Qasim did not place full

[1] *C.P.C.*, IV, 1733, 1736.

[2] A letter dated Lucknow, May 31, 1775, says: "Zabitah Khan who has collected a large number of the Sikhs in the vicinity of the capital is making disturbances there." (*C.P.C.*, IV. 1815.)

[3] *C.P.C.*, IV, 1721; Forrest, II, 442: *Muzaffarnagar District Gazetteer*, 177; *Bulandshahar District Gazetteer*, 150; *Delhi Chronicle*, 289.

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reliance upon his Mughalia troops, and he did not take the initiative in attacking the retreating Rohilla force. On the other hand he opened negotiations for a peaceful settlement. Abdul Ahad disapproved of this policy, and urged him for an action.

Meanwhile Zabita Khan had secured assistance of a strong body of Sikhs under Desu Singh of Kaithal, Rae Singh, Dulaha Singh, Diwan Singh, Bhag Singh, Sahib Singh Khondah, Baghel Singh and Hardukam Singh. The allied troops[1] met the imperialists at Budhana (28 kms south-west of Muzaffarnagar), and after an indecisive engagement retreated to Baghra (11 kms west of Muzaffarnagar). Zabita Khan took up his position at Amirnagar (13 kms north-west of Muzaffarnagar). Abul Qasim attacked him here on the 11th March,[2] 1776. Zabita Khan placed the Sikhs in front and the Rohillas behind them. The Sikhs replied to the onset of the imperialists most vigorously. Then they suddenly withdrew before the heavy artillery fire, following their usual tactic to give an idea to the enemy that they were leaving the field. The Mughals were easily taken in. The two sepoy battalions of Abul Qasim pursued them. When they were far separated from the main army, about half of the Sikh force immediately wheeled round, and delivered a vehement assault on the rear of the imperial forces. They were taken by surprise and in complete confusion ran away. Abul Qasim was left with fifty followers. The Sikhs got busy in plundering the fugitives; while the Rohillas completely surrounded Abul Qasim. The imperial general stuck fast to his ground, and kneeling down on the ground as he was lame of both legs, continued discharging arrows on the Rohillas. In this position he was shot down, and his head was cut off.

The two sepoy battalions were hotly pursued by the other half of the Sikh force. On learning that the day had been lost, Gangaram and Bhawani Singh took shelter in the mud fort of Garhi Duhtar (26 kms west of Amirnagar). The Sikhs invested the fort immediately. They held out against the Sikhs for two days, when they surrendered themselves to Zabita Khan on the condition of immediate release without arms.

Zabita Khan had a great regard for Abdul Ahad Khan owing to

[1]G.R.C. Williams puts the total strength of the Sikh-Rohilla army at 30,000 to 40,000 men. (*Calcutta Review*, LX, 1875, p. 33.)

[2]G.R.C. Williams assigns 2nd Muharram (22 February). It should be 20th Muharram (11 March).

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the friendship that had existed between him and his father Najib-ud-daulah. Zabita used to call the minister his paternal uncle. He put the corpse of Abul Qasim in a coffin and sent it to Abdul Ahad Khan with a letter of apology ascribing his death to divine dispensation," and not to any deliberate action.[1]

Victory of the Sikhs at Jind, May, 1776

The attention of the Sikhs was soon diverted towards Jind.[2] Mulla Rahimdad Khan Rohilla was in the service of Najib-ud-daulah. On his death he remained with Zabita Khan for some time. Later he joined Najaf Khan with 4,000 horse and foot. He displayed great skill and loyalty in the service of the Wazir in his campaigns of Kotban, Agra and Dig. Having failed to obtain a suitaible reward for his services he secured employment under Ranjit Singh Jat. There he intrigued against the Jat Raja and was dismissed. He came to Delhi and won over Abdul Ahad Khan assuring him that he would be able to wreak vengeance on the Sikhs for the murder of his brother. He was appointed governor of Panipat, and was provided with a strong force and a park of artillery.

Leaving Delhi he attacked on the way Muhammad Bashir Khan Habshi, the faujdar of Lalpur and Rohtak. Bashir, leaving all his cash and property behind, fled to Najaf Khan at Dig. The Mulla was emboldened, and captured Hansi and Hissar. Between the newly conquered territory by the Mulla and his district of Panipat lay the small principality of Jind ruled over by Raja Gajpat Singh. With a view to convert his territories into a single, solid block he attacked Gajpat Singh and laid siege to Jind. He demanded surrender of the garrison and the payment of a large sum of money. His troops laid waste Gajpat Singh's territory, and they were all loaded with plunder heavily.

Gajpat Singh sought assistance from his relatives of Patiala, Nabha and Kaithal. Raja Amar Singh of Patiala despatched Diwan Nanumal with a strong contingent. Raja Hamir Singh of Nabha, the Bhais of Kaithal and several other Sikh chiefs of the

[1]Ghulam Ali, II, 61-70; *C.P.C.*, V, 280; *Calcutta Review*, LX, 1875, p. 33; Biharilal, 19-21; Sarkar, III, 132-4.

[2]The town of Jind was encircled by a mud wall with four gates, the Safidonwala to the east, the Ram Rae and the Kathana to the south, and Jhanjwala to the west. There were many fruit gardens on all sides (*Punjab States Gazetteers*, XVII, A, 333.)

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neighbourhood also joined him. They were all 5,000 in number, while Rahimdad Khan had 10,000 men. His soldiers unsuspecting any enemy nearby lay fast asleep. The Sikhs reached Jind after midnight and delivered a sudden attack on the enemy. A large number of Mulla's men escaped with their booty. With the rest Rahimdad Khan engaged the Sikhs in a desperate fight. The Sikhs took to flight. The Mulla advanced close to them in the pursuit. He was struck by three balls in the head and body, and instantly fell down dead.[1]

With the death of their chief the spirit of the soldiers sank. A great confusion prevailed among them. Most of them were cut to pieces, and all their baggage and most of the booty fell into the hands of the Sikhs. Those who had fled were deprived of everything not only by the Sikhs but also by country people who stripped them naked. Even village women had their share in the loot. "Thus fell Rahimdat Khan," writes Polier[2] then living in Delhi, "a Chief of the greatest intrepidity, and at the same time it is said, a man of principles, true to his word, and religious strict partizan of the Mahomedan faith."

"Trophies of Victory," says Griffin, "are still preserved at Jhind, and the tomb of the Khan is to be seen within the principal gate." Gajpat Singh in the company of Patiala detachment conquered Gohana and annexed it to Jind. Hissar, Hansi and Rohtak were occupied by Amar Singh.

Najaf Khan appointed Najaf Quli as *Mulla's* successor. Under instructions from his master, this chief determined to recover for the Empire the districts which Rahimdad had lost, and he won back certain parts of Karnal and Rohtak. In view of these activities of the Mughal Governor, Gajpat Singh and Amar Singh again united their forces to face the common foe. Najaf Quli asked for Najaf Khan's personal attention in the matter. The Sikh chiefs were not prepared to commence hostilities against the first minister of the Empire. They made peace with him, according to which Amar Singh surrendered the districts of Hissar, Hansi and Rohtak, and was permitted to retain Sarsa, Rania and Fatahabad. In return for these territories the Raja promised to pay an annual tribute.

[1]Ibid.

[2]Antoine Louis Henri Polier was a Swiss Engineer in the service of the East India Company. He lived at Agra and Delhi from 1771 to 1779. In the Asiatic Society of Bengal he read a paper on the "History of the Seiks" on December 20, 1787. (*Shah Alam II and his Court*, 47-8.)

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Gaipat Singh retained seven villages from the lands he had seized.[1]

Amar Singh defeats Bhattis

The Bhattis were Muslims. Their strongholds were Bhatner and Bhatinda. They occupied large portions of Hissar District. Raja Amar Singh of Patiala was expanding his kingdom towards the south. In the winter of 1774 he laid siege to a strong Bhatti fort at Begran in the district of Hissar. After a tough fight the fort fell. Amar Singh then seized Fatahabad and Sarsa and besieged Rania situated 14 kms west to Sarsa. It was a strong fort then in possession of Muhammad Amir Khan Bhatti.

Just then news arrived that Rahimdad Khan had attacked Jind and Raja Gajpat Singh had been besieged. Patiala, Nabha, Jind and several other small states were collateral. Amar Singh left Sukhdas Singh in charge of the operations at Rania, and himself returned to Fatahabad. Rania fell after four months. Thus the whole of Sarsa district was annexed to the Patiala State.[2]

The Nawab of Oudh tries to win over the Sikhs, May, 1776

Just at this time Zabita Khan invited the Sikhs to join him in the plunder of Imperial estates. The Nawab Wazir of Oudh feared an attack on his own territory. Negotiations were opened with them on behalf of the Nawab Wazir of Oudh. The Sikhs lay encamped in the territory of Nahar Singh Gujar. Kanwar Sain the *vakil* of the Nawab in the company of Nahar Singh, visited them with letters from Nawab Mukhtar-ud-daulah and Maharaja Surat Singh. The object was to seek their assistance for the Nawab Wazir and the English in expelling Zabita Khan and other Rohilla chiefs from the Ganga Doāb and establishing there the rule of the Nawab Wazir. Rae Singh took the leading part in these transactions. After consulting other Sikhs he told Kanwar Sain that they would not break off their engagements with Zabita Khan.

[1] *Tarikh-e-Muzaffari*, 200a-201a; Khushwaqt Rae, 169; Bakhtmal, 108-9; Bute Shah, 279 b; *Raj Khalsa*, II, 27-8; *The Rajas of the Punjab*, 44-5, 315-6; *Punjab States Gazetteers*, XVII, A, 334; Gian Singh, 909-10; Kartar Singh Kalaswalia, *Tegh Khalsa*, 180.

Muhammad Hasan Khan in his *Tarikh-e-Patiala*, p. 96 assigns 1778 as the date of this event.

[2] *The Rajas of the Punjab*, 42-3.

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This reply was conveyed to Maharaja Surat Singh who wrote another letter to the Sikhs offering them tempting terms. He proposed a sum of 14 lakhs of rupees, one-half of which was to be given in advance at the time of their entering into an alliance with the Nawab Wazir, and the other half after the expulsion of Zabita Khan. "A further reward for this service, Maharaja Surat Singh added, would be that the Nawab would pay annually to the Sikhs half of the revenues of the countries in the Doāb."

Rae Singh communicated these terms to other Sikh chiefs pointing out "the advantages of friendship with the English, who were so true to their engagements." The chiefs agreed with Rae Singh and held out hopes of their accepting the terms offered to them.

All these transactions took place in the presence of Nahar Singh Gujar. He was attracted by the prospects of this change. So with the concurrence of the Sikh chiefs, he suggested to Kanwar Sain that he was willing to join the Nawab of Oudh with a force of 10,000 horse and foot in expelling the Rohillas from the Doāb. After their defeat he would like to have the Rohilla lands on lease for thirty-three lakhs of Rupees per year, to be divided between the Nawab and the Sikhs, the former getting twenty-six lakhs, and the latter seven lakhs. Eventually all these negotiations came to nothing [1]

The Sikhs accompany Zabita Khan to Delhi, 6th June, 1776

The failure of the negotiations between the Nawab of Oudh and the Sikhs, kept the latter devoted to Zabita Khan. He lost no time in taking advantage of his victory over the imperial troops and captured Meerut, Hapur, Khurja and Sikandra; while his Sikh allies extended their depredations as far south as Atrauli, Aligarh and Kasganj. "He had, in consequence of his victory," wrote Polier on the 22nd May, 1776, "laid hold of almost all the country which the King possessed between the Jumna and the Ganges."

Ghulam Qadir Khan, the son of Zabita Khan, and his political agent *Munshi* Mansukh Rae were staying at the imperial court. On hearing the news of the defeat and death of the imperial *faujdar*, Ghulam Qadir fled away from Delhi on the 6th April and joined his father; while Mansukh Rae hid himself in the city. When Zabita's letters were received by Abdul Ahad Khan, the *Munshi* waited upon him and asked for pardon.

[1] *C.P.C.*, V, 279, 280.

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The crafty imperial Minister decided to achieve by cunning what he had failed to gain by force. In a secret conference he said to Mansukh Rae: "My business will now be ruined through the death of Abul Qasim Khan, and Najaf Khan will become all-in-all. Do you bring Zabita Khan over to my side in any way that you can? Let him banish from his heart all fear of my resentment for the slaying of Abul Qasim Khan."[1] He gave written assurances[1] of friendship to Mansukh Rae, and desired him to request his master to seek the Emperor's pardon by personal attendance. Zabita Khan had full confidence in the *Munshi* who had served his family most faithfully for thirty years, and accepted his advice.

Zabita Khan reached Delhi at the head of a large Sikh and Rohilla force, presented himself before the Emperor on the 6th June, 1776, and secured his pardon. Abdul Ahab Khan cleverly managed to get all his Sikh allies and a part of the Rohillas dismissed. When he was left with only 4,000 Rohillas, Abdul Ahad invited Zabita Khan to a dinner in his own palace. He found a large army stationed both inside and outside the Minister's house. From the dining hall he sent a note to Mansukh Rae telling him of the danger he was in, and asking him to save him at any cost. The *Munshi* immediately hurried to Raja Shyam Lal, a confidant of Abdul Ahad, without whose advice he did nothing; and the Raja dissuaded his master from doing any harm to Zabita Khan. Thus the Rohilla chief escaped safely and returned to his troops. He took leave of the Emperor and of Abdul Ahad after two days and returned to Ghausgarh.[2]

The Sikhs plunder Crownlands near Delhi, October-November, 1776

As usual with the Sikhs, they retired to their homes on the approach of the rainy season, which was generally a period of inactivity. They appeared in the limelight again at the close of the rains.

Abdul Ahad Khan, out of jealousy for Najaf Khan's success against the Jats of Bharatpur, invited the Sikhs to create disturbances in the Crownlands near Delhi in order to divert Najaf Khan's att-

[1]Bihari Lal (nephew of Mansukh Rae), 21.

[2]ibid, 21-22; *Calcutta Review*, LX, 1875, p. 34. In September, 1776, Faizullah Khan, the Nawab of Rampur, was accused by the Nawab of Oudh for carrying on diplomatic correspondence with the Sikhs. This charge proved false later on (*C.P.C.*, V, 275, 287, 403.)

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ention from the Jats.[1] In a letter to Major Hannay, Najaf Khan wrote:—"The gravity of his difficulties may be realized from the facts that when he was still engaged in suppressing the Jats, the Sikhs at the instigation of some people, who pose to be the 'pillars of the state,' began to create disturbances in and around the Capital and the King called upon him to subdue them and save the countries belonging to the *Khalsa*.[2] The Sikhs even succeeded probably with the connivance of the minister in enticing Gangaram and Bhawani Singh, the commandants of disciplined sepoy regiments to desert the Emperor and go over to the Sikhs.[3] "Delhi itself might have fallen into the hands of the victors, had not the opportune fall of Deeg left Mirza Nujuf Khan free to act."[4]

At the same time another Sikh force, said to be about 60,000 under Amar Singh of Patiala and Gajpat Singh of Jind, marched to Gohana (70 kms north-west of Delhi), and plundered the neighbouring country. These chiefs had formerly seized Hansi, Hissar and other districts. Zabita Khan, with a view to join them, sent his dependants and belongings to Patiala; while his son, Ghulam Qadir Khan, joined the Sikh army.[5]

The British Government felt deeply concerned at the possible junction of the Sikhs, Marathas and Rohillas under Zabita Khan. They were therefore anxious to form an alliance with the Delhi Regent Najaf Khan in order to protect their interests in Oudh. Richard Barwell in a letter to Henry Savage, dated Calcutta, the 20th September, 1776, wrote:-

"Some apprehensions having been entertained of a design formed by Zabta Cawn in concert with the Seiks and Mahrattas to invade Rohilkhund, it was judged expedient by the Governor to render Nuzziff Cawn useful to the Vizier's Government and to ours, by engaging him, if possible, in a defensive alliance for its protection. Major Hannay is in consequence deputed to proceed to him, but is not to pass our frontier until we are assured by Nuzziff Cawn, in reply to a letter written to him sometime since, that he has dismissed from his service Sumroo and Maddox. Should Nuzziff Cawn come into the views of our Government (and it is his interest as well as ours he should do so), the measure

[1] *C.P.C.*, V, 306, 366.
[2] ibid, 370.
[3] ibid, 299.
[5] *Calcutta Review*, LX, 1875, pp. 33-4.
[4] ibid, 376.

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will effect a strong barrier to the Vizier's dominions, and ease us from the solicitude with which we have hitherto regarded the motions of the powers in the upper parts of Hindostan."[1]

Zabita Khan in alliance with the Sikhs fights against the Emperor, May-September, 1777

We hear of the Sikhs again as allies of Zabita Khan fighting against the imperial forces. After his escape from Delhi Zabita Khan's attitude towards the imperial court became more refractory than even before. He refused either to surrender the crownlands usurped by him or to pay tribute for them. At Abdul Ahad's persuasion the Emperor decided upon fighting with Zabita Khan. He was offered one more chance to rectify his past conduct. Zabita visited the imperial camp at Loni (10 kms north-east of Delhi), and stayed there from the 13th to the 27th April, 1777; but they could not come to any agreement. The Emperor allowed him to depart in safety. The imperial army began its advance towards Ghausgarh on the 28th April. The nominal office of *Mir Bakhshi* and the title of Amir-ul-Umara were taken away from him, and were conferred upon Najaf Khan, who was invested with the chief command of this expedition.

Ghausgarh was defended by three forts, which formed a triangle, each side being 5 kms in length. Lohari, a colony of Afridi Pathans was in the east, Thana Bhawan in the west; while Jalalabad, an Orakzai Pathan settlement, formed its northern apex. Ghausgarh, an Umarkhel Pathan colony, was situated in the centre of this triangle.

When the imperial army was steadily approaching towards Ghausgarh Zabita Khan sent *Munshi* Mansukh Rae to persuade the Sikhs in any way possible to come to his aid. The *Munshi* cleverly managed to bring a force of seven thousand "warlike Sikh horsemen."[2] The Rohillas numbered 15,000.

Zabita Khan got ready to face the imperial army. He marched forward. At a distance of about 24 kms from Ghausgarh an action took place between the Maratha advance-guard of the imperial army and a contingent of the Sikh scouts. The latter being fewer in number were obliged to retreat towards their camp. The Sikhs

[1] *Bengal Past and Present*, XV, part II, 1917, p. 131.
[2] *Haqiqat*, 38, puts this number at 3,000.

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were joined by other parties, and they maintained an irregular fight till a considerable force had time to come to their assistance. Najaf Khan on hearing of the action advanced immediately with the troops he had near him. He was soon joined by three battalions and 2,000 horse. Afzal Khan who commanded the Rohillas and the Sikhs learning that the Nawab himself had come into the field advanced with about 9,000 men. After an engagement of an hour the Rohillas and the Sikhs retreated and were followed closely for 5 kms by Najaf Khan's troops

The Emperor reached Raepur, (8 kms south of Ghausgarh), on the 23rd May, 1777, and decided to pitch his camp there. On the morning of the 24th the ground for encampment was taken possession of by Latafat Ali Khan with all the troops under his command. But when other bodies of the army tried to occupy several quarters allotted to them, they were engaged in several slight skirmishes with the Rohillas and the Sikhs. In the afternoon Najaf Khan heard that a large force of the enemy had appeared in front of his camp. He ordered all his army to prepare for battle and posted himself in front of his line. The Rohilla force was commanded by Zabita Khan in person. It numbered about nine or ten thousands. They first approached Samru's quarters, and then that of Latafat Ali Khan; but were driven off from both places by artillery fire. They moved to the left and attacked the Gosains, who were reinforced by two battalions under Latafat Ali Khan. A warm action resulted, and the imperial force began to gain ground upon Zabita Khan till late in the evening when he retired to Ghausgarh leaving two thousand men in the field to watch Najaf Khan's movements. It was reported that Najaf Khan had sustained a loss of 250 men in killed and wounded; and Zabita Khan a loss of 400 men.

Najaf Khan took about a fortnight in reorganizing his troops. He delivered an assault on Lohari on the 8th June. The Rohilla patrol after a little fighting fell back. The Mughals gave them a hot pursuit and were caught in an ambush. Two hundred of them lost their lives, while the rest fled away. Najaf Khan came up with artillery, and rained heavy fire upon Zabita's Sikhs who formed the vanguard. The Sikhs rushed furiously forward. The brunt of their attack was borne by 2,000 Marathas under Bagha Rao. The engagement was broken off at sunset.

A second attack was made by the imperial army on the 11th

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June. The Sikh cavalry by a circuitous movement attacked the right flank of the Mughal trenches; but they were repulsed by the heavy fire of the artillery.

On the 13th June Thana Bhawan was attacked, but with no better results, as the imperial troops failed to tempt the Rohillas out of their trenches.

Najaf Khan was sorely disappointed at his failure in three successive attacks without producing any effect on the enemy who had a much smaller number of men and resources. On the 23rd June he employed the whole army in a regular battle which was fought with greater fury and bloodshed. It also ended in a fiasco.

Munna Lal in his *Tarikh-e-Shah Alam* on p. 190 states that Sahib Singh Khondah deserted the Rohilla camp on the 24th June, and took service under Najaf Khan. After staying in the imperial camp for two days he rejoined Zabita Khan. As the Sikhs were sincerely attached to the Rohilla chieftain, and Najaf Khan was trying to win them over, it seems probable that Sahib Singh played this trick only to find out the secrets of the imperial army.

The reason for Najaf Khan's failure was the jealousy of Abdul Ahad Khan who was determined "to cross every plan of Najaf Khan so as to rob him of the credit of victory. Najaf Khan was no doubt the *Mir Bakhshi* or supreme head of the army, but Abdul Ahad,—the grey bearded, broken in health, broken in heart by the death of his dancing-girl wife Waziran, and a Kashmiri by blood, —had got himself nominated as second *Bakhshi !* His absolute sway over Shah Alam's mind turned him into the *de facto* commander-in-chief over the head of Mirza Najaf."[1]

Zabita Khan embraces Sikhism under the name of Dharam Singh, September, 1777

Najaf Khan's failure to make any impression in four assaults during sixteen days exasperated him. He "taunted Abdul Ahad with enjoying the spectacle of the battle from a housestop safe in the rear and wilfully causing the defeat by holding back the reinforcements which might have turned the drawn battle into victory for the imperial forces. The Kashmiri retorted by charging the Commander-in-Chief with blindly leading his men into a useless butchery. The Emperor sided with his favourite, and Najaf Khan

[1]Sarkar, III, 137-38.

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in disgust retired to his tent to sulk in idleness for some time."[1]

Then the rainy season set in, flooding the river Krishni running to the left of the imperial camp. The ease-loving imperial officers and soldiers suffered terribly. The Sikhs took advantage of this situation; and on the night of 22nd July when it was raining heavily, they forded the river near Thana Bhawan and attacked the Mughal camp, penetrating just near the Emperor's tents, from where they were driven away by the musketry fire of the imperial guards. The Emperor transferred his camp about 3 kms farther away towards Jalalabad.

The Sikhs and Rohillas harassed the imperial army by cutting off their supply of provisions. On the 3rd August, the Sikhs attacked a large convoy of grain laden on packoxen coming from Delhi. The Emperor immediately despatched Bagha Rao to rescue the convoy. Simultaneously another force under Najaf Quli and Latafat Ali was directed to plunder and destroy the Sikh camp near Thana Bhawan lying defenceless at the time. Both plans were successfully executed. Afterwards the Sikhs took up their position farther north near Jalalabad.

Meanwhile Najaf Khan was trying to win over Zabita's Rohilla and Sikh allies. The Sikhs refused to desert but Dilawar Ali and Qalandar Ali, the Pathan chiefs of Jalalabad, agreed to join the imperial army when the onslaught would be delivered on the trenches under their control.

By the close of the rainy season, Najaf Khan began to make preparations on a greater scale. He was joined by Afrasiyab Khan from Aligarh and Daud Beg Khan from Agra with plenty of men and material. Najaf Khan opened the final campaign on the 14th September, 1777. Afrasiyab led the vanguard at the head of 10,000 strong. The entire Mughal army was put in motion. The main onset was made on the Jalalabad trenches, while stray parties detained the Rohilla forces at other centres. Zabita Khan came from Ghausgarh to oppose the assailants; but the Jalalabad chiefs played their treacherous part. They guided the enemy through the trenches and the town, and turned their gun-fire on Zabita's troops. The Rohillas fought desperately; but they were overpowered by the sheer force of numbers. Only the Sikhs held their own at Thana Bhawan.

[1]ibid, 140-41.

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Zabita Khan was hopelessly defeated. He fled to the Sikh camp, and under their protection escaped from the scene of battle. His entire camp, treasures and his family including his son Ghulam Qadir, women and children and the families of all his military officers fell into the hands of the victors. Zabita Khan and his Sikh allies retired across the Jamuna in the Karnal district. Zabita having nothing except the clothes he was wearing threw himself on the bounty of the Sikhs. To strengthen his alliance further he openly declared himself a convert to Sikhism and assumed the name of Dharam Singh.[1] This memorable event gave rise to the following saying still current in the Saharanpur district:

Ek Gurū kā do chelā, Adhā Sikh ādhā Rohillā.

"The Guru's one disciple was half Sikh and half Rohilla."[2]

The Governor-General congratulated the Emperor on this victory and sent him a nazar of 101 gold muhars[29].

This campaign shattered the power of the Rohilla family founded by Najib-ud-daulah, as three years earlier the other branch descending from Ali Muhammad had been crushed by Shuja-ud-daulah of Oudh,[3] with the help of British forces. Rohilkhand was annexed to his kingdom. The head of the Rohillas in the upper Ganga Doāb was Zabita Khan.

[1]Forster on p. 325 writes, "This chief, the degenerate son of Najeb-ud-Dowlah, has made no vigorous effort in his defence; but thinking to soothe them, and divert their encroachments, assumed the name of Sicque, and ostensibly, it is said, became a convert to the faith of Nanock. (Durm Singh was the name taken by Zabitah Khan). It is not seen that he derived any benefit from his apostacy; for at the period of my journey through the Duab, the Sicques were invading his fort, and he was reduced to the desperate alternative of calling in a body of other mercenaries to his assistance."

Cunningham on p. 117 says, "He was so desirous of conciliating them, that he is credibly said to have received the Pahul, or initiatory rite and to have taken the new name of Dhurrum Singh."

[2]*C.P.C.*, V, 687.

[3]*Delhi Chronicle*, 301-2; Ghulam Ali, III, 85-8, 96-117, 130-36; Munna Lal, 183-200; Khair-ud-din, 295-300, 312, 342-43; *C.P.C.*, V, 87, 280, 708; Bihari Lal, 22-3; Miskin (present in campaign), 323-38; Browne, II, 29; Francklin, 72; *Tarikh-e-Muzaffari*, 215a-b; Middleton's letter dated at Lucknow, May 29, 1777, *N.A.I.*, Political Proceedings, June 19, 1777, Letters from Nathe Middleton, Resident at Lucknow, dated 23 and 29 May, 1777; Political Proceedings, October 6, 1777; Middleton's letter dated 21 September and the letter of R. Stuart, the Captain commanding in Rohilkhand, dated at Daranagar, September 17, 1777; *Haqiqat*, 38; Cunningham, 117; *Muzaffarnagar District Gazetteer*, 177-8; *Saharanpur District Gazetteer*, 192.

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The Sikhs in alliance with Zabita Khan raid the Doāb, March-April, 1778

Having retired to their homes after the battle of Ghausgarh, the Sikhs kept quiet for nearly six months. Meanwhile several changes were made in the administration of crownlands on both sides of the Jamuna. Sayyid Ali Khan, the son-in-law of Abdul Ahad, was appointed to the *faujdari* of Sonepat—Panipat district on the 5th February, 1778. Najaf Quli Khan held charge of the Saharanpur and Muzaffarnagar districts with his headquarters at Ghausgarh. Afrasiyab Khan controlled the government of Meerut, Bulandshahar and Aligarh districts. Najaf Khan was at Alwar involved in a war with the Raja of the place.

Zabita Khan and his Sikh friends resolved to avail themselves of the absence of Najaf Khan. "They re-entered the Doāb, scourging the whole country between the rivers. Many of the more powerful zemindars, moreover, took advantage of the general confusion, and *played the jackal to the Sikh lion.*"[1]

They penetrated into the country as far south as Khurja in the Bulandshahar district. Here they were opposed by Afrasiyab Khan who eventually drove them back. They returned to Ghausgarh and invested Najaf Quli. Miskin who took a prominent part in their pursuit gives the following interesting account:

"Zulfiqar-ud-daulah (Najaf Khan) wrote urgent letters to Nawab Afrasiyab Khan to march immediately to Ghausgarh for assistance. Afrasiyab Khan asked for my opinion. I replied that we must go there, but the Sikh horsemen are wandering everywhere from village to village. Allow me with a body of 200 horse to patrol the country as far as Sikandra, Dadri, Dasna and Dhaulana, and you can follow me to punish the Sikhs. He approved of this plan and gave me leave. I toured all these places in two days. With the help of God the Sikhs fled away in disappointment. Two Sikhs were realizing tribute from a village four *kos* (12 kms) from Shahjahanabad. They took to flight on my approach. Afrasiyab followed me to Ghazi-ud-din Nagar (Ghaziabad). Here he received several letters from Nawab Abdul Ahad Khan, inviting him to Delhi. Leaving me in charge of the troops, he went to the capital. He stayed there for a fortnight, and cleverly removed the differences existing between Najaf Khan and Abdul Ahad. Afrasiyab then

[1]*Calcutta Review*, LX, 1875, p. 35.

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came to the army. We advanced stage by stage and reached Ghausgarh."[1]

About the end of April they expelled the Sikhs from the Doāb, and pursued them on the other side of the Jamuna as far as Karnal. Raja Gajpat Singh of Jind and Dalel Singh of Malod were ready to submit; but they were opposed in this design by Bhag Singh of Thanesar. The imperial generals decided to punish the latter. They captured Budhakhera (6 kms north-east of Karnal) and Baragaon (6 kms north of Budhakhera). At this place the Sikh chiefs came to terms promising not to harbour Najaf Khan's enemies and not to plunder the royal domains. The imperial commanders thereupon retired to their posts. But the Sikhs attached no importance to this settlement. They neither surrendered Zabita Khan nor gave up their plans of spoil.[2]

The Sikhs ravage outskirts of the Capital, September-October, 1778

The Sikhs again kept quiet for a few months. But when the rainy season was over, they resumed their ravaging activities in the neighbourhood of Delhi. In this undertaking they were probably instigated by Zabita Khan, as this was the only means of securing good treatment for his family now captive at Agra. Abdul Ahad Khan in a letter, received at Calcutta on the 26th November, 1778, wrote to the Governor-General of Bengal: "It is perhaps known to him what disturbances the Sikhs are creating and how disorder prevails in the neighbourhood of Shahjahanabad and indeed throughout the Empire."[3]

Najaf Khan was away from the capital carrying on a campaign against the Raja of Alwar. Abdul Ahad's policy in general was to oppose Najaf Khan's plans. Knowing that Najaf disliked the Sikhs, Abdul Ahad decided to form a friendly alliance with them. A diarist of the imperial capital recorded:

23 September, 1778. Abdul Ahad's lieutenant "Bahram Quli Khan welcomed and entertained with a feast Sahib Singh (Khondah) and other chiefs who lay encamped near the Shalamar gardens. Mallu Khan, a younger son of Najib-ud-daulah, who was with the Sikhs came into the city."[4]

[1] Miskin, 336-37.
[2] ibid, 337-8; Sarkar, III, 160-61.
[3] *C.P.C.*, V, 1212; Sarkar, III, 173-74.
[4] *Delhi Chronicle*, 310.

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26th September, 1778. "Abdul Ahad Khan visited the Sikhs in the garden of Yaqub Ali Khan. They presented him with bows and horses, and he granted them robes of honour."[1]

1st October, 1778. "This was the Dasahra day and the Sikhs riding out went to the Guru's bungalow near Rikab Ganj, and there demolished a mosque and ravaged the cultivated fields."[2] *Delht chronicle* mentions the Sikh slogan: "Jehād in the path of Allah" teaches them jehad in the path of the Guru.

The Sikhs stayed in the capital for about a month at the expense of Abdul Ahad Khan. Then they entered the Doāb "scourging the whole country between the rivers."[3]

The Sikhs enter Rohilkhand by repulsing the English troops, December, 1778

Passing across the Doāb the Sikhs came on the banks of the Ganga. The ferries on this river leading into Rohilkhand were guarded by British troops whose cantonment was at Daranagar (10 kms south of Bijnor). On the 5th December, 1778, a party of 800 Sikhs appeared at Jai Ghat above Daranagar. A *jamadar* posted by the British authorities at this place stood his ground until his ammunition was spent, and six persons of his party were killed and wounded. The Sikhs crossed over and plundered and burnt several villages in the district of Najibabad.

On the 6th December another Sikh party attacked the Ghat of Nāgal (12 kms north-west of Najibabad). Here they were opposed and repulsed by Lieutenant Knowels who had been joined by the *jamadar* of Jai Ghat at 9 o'clock the night previous. This officer was, however, struck by a ball in the thigh. The Sikhs came to Byee Ghat. At this place the guard was reinforced by Lieutenant Namara; but the Sikhs succeeded in crossing over. They also ravaged the districts through which they passed. Lieutenant-Colonel Muir, Officer Commanding at Daranagar, detached a battalion of Company's sepoys nnder Captain Landeg and a body of Nawab's cavalry with a gun in their pursuit in order to expel them from Rohilkhand. As other parties of the Sikhs were expected to assemble on the banks of the Ganga with the intention of crossing it, Muir called to his assistance eight companies from the 22nd Batta-

[1]ibid, 311.
[2]ibid.
[3]*Calcutta Review*, LX, 1875, p. 35.

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lion. Nawab Faizullah Khan also placed a contingent of 700 horse under *Risaldar* Muhammad Umar Khan at the disposal of Muir. The result of these preparations was that the Sikhs returned from Rohilkhand and recommenced desolation of the Doāb. Such was the dread and terror of the Sikhs that not a single imperial officer appeared in the field to oppose them; and the people in view of the utter wretchedness of the Mughal authorities quietly yielded to their unavoidable fate.[1]

Devastation of the environs of Delhi, January-April, 1779

Devastating towns and villages on their way, the Sikhs appeared in the beginning of the new year in the vicinity of the imperial capital. The Emperor was "alarmed at the accounts he daily received of the ravages of Seiks about the environs of Dehly." Najaf Khan, the first minister of the Empire was busy at this time in fighting the Raja of Alwar. Raja's agent, Khoshali Ram Bohra, was negotiating for peace; but owing to the intrigues of Abdul Ahad, then present in the imperial camp, no settlement was arrived at.

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The Emperor issued urgent orders to Najaf Khan to conclude peace with the Raja and to proceed to Delhi without any delay "to oppose the incursion of the Seiks." Najaf Khan came to terms with the Raja and agreed to receive a tribute of eight lakhs of which three lakhs was to be paid at once, and the remainder by monthly instalments. Najaf Khan promised to assist the Raja whenever his country was invaded by any power.

On approaching Delhi, Najaf Khan opened negotiations with the Sikhs for a peaceful settlement. He knew that in the midst of Abdul Ahad's intrigues he would not succeed in punishing the Sikhs. He therefore appealed to them in the name of their religion to stop despoiling the crownlands. The appeal made to the noble sentiments of the Sikhs had the desired effect. They recognised his claims to the country lying between the Jamuna and the Ganga in Meerut district, promising not to desolate it again.[2]

Najaf Khan afterwards considered it advisable to conciliate Zabita Khan with a view to avail himself of his services in relation

[1] *N.A.I.*, Secret Proceedings, 28 December, 1778, pp. 2541-44, 2555-58; Secret Letters to Court, III, 1st February, 1779, p. 59; *C.P.C.*, V, 1371.

[2] *N.A.I.*, Secret Proceedings, 19 April, 1779, pp. 597-8; *C.P.C.*, V, 1568, 1643.

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with the Sikhs in the future. He gave him solemn assurances of safety, and called him to Delhi. He showed him great consideration and respect and restored to him his family, lands and the district of Saharanpur. In order to cement this friendly alliance further Zabita Khan offered his daughter in marriage to Najaf Khan, and left for Ghausgarh to make nuptial preparations.

On this occasion Zabita Khan committed a diplomatic blunder. He accepted terms from Najaf Khan without taking the advice of his Sikh friends. "In doing so both parties forgot to consult the Sikhs, who henceforth regarded their former ally as a renegade, and made his possessions again the scene of the same rapine and destruction as had marked their earlier irruptions."[1]

There was an excellent opportunity of Abdul Ahad Khan to fan the flame of Sikh resentment against Zabita Khan and Najaf Khan and he was not the man to miss it. These diplomatic successes won by Najaf Khan together with his brilliant victories at Ghausgarh and Alwar had raised his prestige considerably. All this was unbearable by the old man who, out of his personal jealousy for the Wazir, was determined to eclipse his former patron, and he would not mind if in that attempt he brought destruction to the Empire.

[1]Biharilal, 23; *Muzaffarnagar District Gazetteer*, 178.

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CHAPTER 7

The Delhi Minister's disastrous Patiala Campaign, June—October, 1779

Bargain struck with the Sikhs

Stung by deep feelings of jealousy and rivalry against Najaf Khan, Abdul Ahad began to poison the ears of the Emperor against him. He persuaded Shah Alam to believe that Najaf Khan wanted to become the Dictator like Najib-ud-daulah, and to reduce the Emperor to a mere figure-head. He also aroused the Emperor's religious and racial sentiments against Najaf Khan, as he was an Irani and a Shia. The timorous Emperor was deceived by the wily intriguer's glibness.

But Najaf Khan could not be overthrown by Abdul Ahad and the Emperor all by themselves unless military aid could be obtained from outside. Zabita Khan had already refused to undertake the perilous adventure. The power of the Rajas of Bharatpur and Alwar had been broken by Najaf Khan. The Marathas were busy in fighting with the English. Ahmad Shah Abdali was dead, and his son Timur Shah was involved in his own domestic troubles. The Sikhs were the only people available and so he entered into negotiations with them.

When Abdul Ahad was maturing these plans he received a petition from Raja Amar Singh of Patiala for help against his co-religionists with whom he was at war. The Sikh leaders including the envoys of Bhai Desu Singh of Kaithal who were present in Delhi, incited him to conquer not only the Cis-Satluj territory, but also to recover the provinces of Lahore and Multan for the Empire, promising their full support. Abdul Ahad was puffed up at the bright prospect, and accepted the terms of the Sikhs.

Thus the success of the expedition was marred from the very beginning. Amar Singh of Patiala had invited the Nawab to crush

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the power of the other Cis-Satluj Sikh chiefs, whose territory he wanted to seize. Now these very people against whom he was expected to proceed became his confidants and the sole advisers. These sardars were with him as long as he could pay them, and when his money ran out, they not only deserted him but also turned against him.

"Alā Jat's progeny, in addition to the land-hunger common to all chiefs, were puffed up with boundless pride in consequence of the territorial confirmation and superlative title which Amar Singh had bought from the Durrani conqueror. The hand of the Patiala Rajah was against every other Cis-Satluj Sikh sardar of note, and their hands were against him."

The expedition leaves Delhi, 18th June, 1779

Abdul Ahad requested the Emperor to accompany the expedition; but he declined on the score of hot weather, it being the month of June, the hottest part of the year. The eldest prince, Mirza Jahandar Shah pretended illness. The second prince, Mirza Jahan Shah Farkhunda Bakht[1], was persuaded to go with the Nawab. Abdul Ahad was given 50,000 horse and foot and 200 pieces of cannon.[2]

Nawab Abdul Ahad Khan (*alias* Majd-ud-daulah) and the Prince left Delhi on the 18th June,[3] 1779. The Nawab marched along the western bank of the Jamuna so that the soldiers might not suffer from want of water, and the Prince being very fond of fishing could enjoy this pastime. The first halt was made at Barari Ghat. On the 26th June they were at Bakhtawarpur in *parganah* Haveli. At Barota in *parganah* Sonepat the Prince caught a lot of fish which he presented to his nobles. On the 29th July they were encamped 6 kms

[1]The poet Mir Taqi Mir, a contemporary, referring to this expedition in his autobiography on p. 132 calls him Farkhunda Akhtar.

[2]British Museum *Persian Akhbarat*, or 25,021, folio 259b. Franklin says that Abdul Ahad was given "Twenty thousand men with a respectable train of artillery" (*Shah Aulum*, 87). Warren Hastings in a report dated 14 December 1784, puts the number at 30,000. (Forrest's *Selections*, 1772-85, III, 1124.) Jonathan Scott, II, 269, says that he was accompanied by "six battalions of sepoys armed in the European manner, a considerable train of artillery, six thousand horse, eight thousand irregular infantry, and some bands of mercenary Sikhs; so that, in point of members, his army was formidable.

[3]Sir Jadunath Sarkar puts it on 3rd June; but Munna Lal, who gives an account of Shah Alam's reign from year to year, and Ghulam Ali, both assign 18 June. (Munna Lal, 217; Ghulam Ali, III, 131; Sarkar, III, 175.)

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from Panipat.[1]

The Sikh chiefs join the Prince

At Karnal many Sikh chiefs including Sahib Singh Khondah, Diwan Singh, Baghel Singh and Karam Singh Nirmala waited upon the Nawab; but the Prince was not happy to have the Sikhs in his army as he was well aware of the treacherous nature of the people of this sect.[2]

Gajpat Singh, the *zamindar* of Karnal, the most loyal Sikh *sardar* of the Emperor, paid homage to the Prince. Baghel Singh who bore long-standing hostility to Gajpat Singh advised Majd-ud-daulah to imprison Gajpat Singh in order to extract a large sum of tribute from him. The Nawab put him in confinement. Gajpat Singh secured his liberty by promising two lakhs of rupees.[3]

Tahmas Khan Miskin who was present in the campaign states: "Gajpat Singh who had been in charge of the administration of the Karnal District for twenty years presented himself in the camp. Having taken responsibility for all the affairs of the neighbourhood, he became the Nawab's chief confidant and sole adviser in all the business of the government. The Nawab regulated his march, according to his instruction and guidance. He enlisted every Sikh who came in search of service. Every Sikh chief who interviewed him received elephants, aigrettes, etc., according to his rank. He appointed Sikh military posts in places where the inhabitants had fled away in fear of the royal troops. Abdul Ahad Khan was a very wise and experienced old man, and was in the habit of studying books of history and literature. But as he had fallen a victim to misfortune he lost all of his sagacity. He avoided his own companions, gave entire confidence in public as well as in private affairs to the Sikhs; and whenever he undertook any expedition, it was done at their advice. He did not take this fact into consideration that they were non-Muslims, and however attached outwardly they were to him, they would deceive him just in the critical hour."[4]

Camp at Karnal during rainy Season

Between Karnal and Patiala there was no river except three

[1] *C.P.C.*, V, 1568.
[2] Munna Lal, 217-8.
[3] Khair-ud-din, II, 3.
[4] Miskin. 340-1.

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streams, Sarasvati, Markanda and Ghaggar, all of which were easily fordable. But the Nawab decided to spend the rainy season at Karnal[1] (only 125 kms north of Delhi). At this place he was visited by numerous Sikh chiefs against whom the Patiala Raja was carrying on a regular campaign. They joined him and persuaded him to fight against Raja Amar Singh for whose assistance Abdul Ahad had chiefly undertaken this expedition. Abdul Ahad was tempted by the bright prospect of booty and tribute and readily accepted this advice. Thus his most powerful ally among the Cis-Satluj Sikhs was antagonized.

Desu Singh of Kaithal is ill-treated

Abdul Ahad broke up his camp at Karnal on the 9th September when the rainy season was almost over. The same day the Nawab sent Gajpat Singh, Baghel Singh and Sada Singh to bring to his camp Desu Singh of Kaithal who had been oppressed by Raja Amar Singh. Desu Singh was presented to him near Thanesar. Baghel Singh and Nigahi Mal introduced him to the Nawab thus: "Desu Singh has arrived. His country which has been taken possession of by Raja Amar Singh may be restored to him." Desu Singh offered as *nazar*[2] five gold coins, two bows, five cotton bed-sheets, and two

[1]*C.P.C.*, V, 1568.

[2]The word *nazar* means an offering made to a person in authority, either on first interview or on the day of a festival, or on some special occasion. In the eighteenth century it consisted of a present in money or other presents according to the rank and position of both. All these were presented with a certain form. The visitor placed money on a small handkerchief folded to a quarter. He held it on the joined palms of both hands. He then advanced without a salute close to the superior person and presented his nazar. When it was taken or touched, the man retreated two or three paces, made his bow, and took his position either standing or sitting as he was bid or his rank required. Persons of nearly equal position were embraced, some before and some after the presentation of the *nazar*. Officers presented their *nazars* on the sleeves of their coat drawn upon the palm of the hand. Superior officers presented only their sabres placed upon both the palms. This is touched with the right hand which was then carried to the forehead in token of acceptance. A common trooper meeting his officer presented his sabre in that manner out of respect. A *nazar* above 25 gold coins was presented in a bag which the visitor placed at the foot of the seat. There were numerous niceties to be observed while receiving, taking up, touching, refusing and also in advancing to present a *nazar*. *Seir*, I, 32-3, f.n.)

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horses. He was granted a *khilat*[1] of five pieces, a *sarpech*[2] and a sword; while two *doshalas* were given to his companions.[3]

Abdul Ahad demanded three lakhs of rupees as tribute from Desu Singh; but he agreed to pay two lakhs. Impetuous and imperious as the Nawab was, this reduction of tribute flared him up, and he raised his claim to five lakhs. Desu Singh naturally refused to comply with such an unfair demand. Gajpat Singh who at heart was on the side of Amar Singh took advantage of this situation. During the night of the 13th September in a private conversation he said to the Nawab: "The tribute from us can be realized at any moment; but it is very difficult to get money from Desu Singh. As a politic device, therefore, arrest all the *sardars* including myself. Afterwards release us and keep Desu Singh in confinement until he pays his dues." Accordingly Abdul Ahad called in his tent Diwan Nanumal, Maha Singh, Ram Dayal, Desu Singh and Gajpat Singh, and apprehended all of them. Then Taj Muhammad Khan reported that all except Desu Singh were willing to pay their arrears. They were set free with the exception of Desu Singh, who along with eight of his comrades was put in confinement. The question of his tribute was under discussion on the 14th of September. The Nawab said to Desu Singh: "Withdraw from your *taluqa*, as the Emperor's direct administraiion would be established there. Where are the guns and other things looted from Abul Qasim Khan (the Nawab's brother defeated and killed in the Doāb in March, 1776)? For a long time you have been living on plunder, this will be taken from you." Desu Singh replied, "What I acquired I spent on my troops. In my house there is no money. Do what you please."[4] The Diwan of Desu Singh ultimately offered five lakhs as tribute and 1¼ lakhs for expenses, payable in one month's time, provided that Desu Singh's estates were confirmed to him under a royal rescript and protected

[1]A khilat consisted of several articles of dress, and was properly called *saropa* meaning a covering from head to foot. Three pieces were generally given—a *dastar* or *chira* (turban), a *patka* (girdle), and a *jama*, a piece for a gown. To persons of importance two or three pieces more were added—a double piece for a gown, a *jubba* (short gown with short sleeves), and a piece of light brocade for long drawers. All these pieces were of muslin embroidered in gold, silver and silk on the most elegant patterns. (*Seir*, I, 15, f.n.)

[2]A *sarpech* is a piece of jewel-work worn on the forepart of the turban in such a way that the gem of it hangs on the forehead.

[3]*Akhbarāt*, 246b-247a; *Tarikh-e-Muzaffari*, 201a.

[4]*Akhbarat*, 250b.

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from encroachments by Raja Amar Singh.

After some time a tribute of four lakhs was settled upon Desu Singh. Three lakhs of rupees were immediately realized, and for the payment of the balance, his son Lal Singh was taken as a hostage. Desu Singh was given congee on the 26th September.[1]

Arrival of more Sikh chiefs in the camp

Rae Singh of Buriya, Bhanga Singh and Bhag Singh joined the imperial camp at Thanesar on the 12th September. Abdul Ahad sent a few baskets of sweets in their tents. Bhag Singh and Bhanga Singh wrote to the Sikh chiefs of Shahabad and Ambala calling them to the Prince's camp. They replied: "You have plundered the royal domains. Now that the Prince and Nawab Majd-ud-daulah have come into your territory, you seek assistance from us. We will not come."[2]

In the evening of the 14th September, Mohar Singh and some other *sardars* at the head of 400 horse waited upon the Nawab and offered him some bows, cotton bed-sheets and three horses, and in return each received a *khilat* of five pieces, a *sarpech* and a sword; while their companions were given *doshalas*. On the morning of the 15th September Karam Singh arrived in the camp and presented two horses and some bows. He was awarded a *khilat* of five pieces, a *sarpech* and a sword. These chiefs were joining the imperial camp partly to crush their opponents with the assistance of the King's forces and partly to plunder the territory of the Raja of Patiala at whose domination they were chafing.[3]

Diwan Nanumal waits on the Prince

A little earlier Raja Shambu Nath and Raja Daya Ram had been sent to Patiala to bring Nanumal, the Diwan of Raja Amar Singh, to the camp. They returned with the Diwan on the 12th September. Nanumal was lodged in Gajpat Singh's camp. The Nawab was informed that the Diwan had brought five lakhs of rupees, and was accompanied by 1,000 horse and foot. On the 13th November, Nanumal and Maha Singh, brother-in-law of Raja Amar Singh, were granted an audience by the Prince. Each presented to the

[1]ibid, 252a; *Tarikh-e-Muzaffari*, 201a; Bute Shah, 281b.
[2]*Akhbarat*, 246b, 248a.
[3]ibid, 252b.

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Prince eleven gold coins and a horse and to the Nawab seven gold coins and a horse. Nanumal was granted a *khilat* of five pieces, a *jigha*,[1] a sarpech, and a palanquin; while Maha Singh received all these articles, with an elephant instead of palanquin. In the afternoon Nanumal and Maha Singh were called by Abdul Ahad Khan to settle the amount of tribute. Diwan Nanumal offered bankers' bills to the value of five lakhs and an extra sum of Rs. 25,000 by way of *nazarana* for the Prince, on the condition of his immediate retreat. Abdul Ahad replied in anger: "I have come here at your call. I shall exact from you, in any way that is possible, all that has been spent."[2] On the 14th September Nanumal was presented with a shawl, and the Nawab ordered his troops to keep a watch on the Diwan.[3]

Raja Amar Singh's defiance

All this time Raja Amar Singh, the foremost supporter of Abdul Ahad Khan, had refrained from coming into the camp. As a matter of fact he had been frightened by the Nawab's treatment of Gajpat Singh and Desu Singh. Although his Diwan and brother-in-law were in the imperial camp; yet it was a point of honour for Abdul Ahad Khan to have the Raja in attendance upon the Prince. He therefore constantly insisted on his personal interview. Amar Singh on finding the Nawab pressing for his presence in his camp invited assistance from the Trans-Satluj Sikhs. The Nawab received news on the 15th September that Tara Singh Ghaiba, Karam Singh and other chiefs all numbering five lay encamped 60 kms from Patiala.[4]

On the 17th September Abdul Ahad moved his camp to the village Seoli (probably Sandhauli, 5 kms south-east of Pehowa?). There Gajpat Singh with a letter from Amar Singh waited on the Nawab and said: "Raja Amar Singh had invited you to punish Desu Singh and other Sikh chiefs. You have become friendly to Desu Singh and settled the amount of tribute to be paid by him. It was for this reason that the Raja was hesitating to come into the

[1]A *jigha* is an ornament of gold studded with jewels surmounted by an aigrette. It is worn in the turban vertically on the right side. The aigrette imitates all the hues of the most brilliant rainbow.

[2]*Akhbarat*, 248a, 249a.

[3]ibid, 251a.

[4]ibid, 253a.

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presence." Diwan Nanumal also stated that Raja Amar Singh would not come into the camp and that the Nawab should accept the tribute and retire. Then there came a messenger announcing the flight of inhabitants from Patiala, and the arrival on the bank of the Satluj of Jassa Singh, Khushhal Singh and Tara Singh Ghaiba at the head 15,000 horse.[1]

On the 19th September news arrived in the camp that Amar Singh fled from his capital, leaving its defence to his wife, though she had urged him to pay the necessary tribute and not oppose the Prince. The loyal chief Gajpat Singh stood surety for Amar Singh's dues, and pressed Abdul Ahad to retire; but he would not listen.[2]

On the 20th September, an hour after dawn, the Prince marched forward to the village Harira (probably Hatira, 32 kms north-west of Karnal?). Abdul Ahad told Gajpat Singh that he was resolved to march to Patiala unless Amar Singh came into the camp. He declared that he would not accept any money or terms regarding Amar Singh's tribute from no other than the Raja himself.[3]

This day Diwan Nanumal raised the sum of the Patiala tribute to seven lakhs saying: "Raja Amar Singh is loyal to you in every way; but he is not coming to an audience as his enemies are with you. Please take seven lakhs of rupees and retire." Abdul Ahad, insisted on Amar Singh's attendance in the camp only once promising to accept all terms.[4] His intention seemed to be to keep Amar Singh in detention until a large sum of money covering all the expenses of the expedition was paid by him. Amar Singh knew this and had made up his mind not to appear in the imperial camp at all. To keep the other Sikh chiefs contented Majd-ud-daulah assured Bhanga Singh, Baghel Singh and others that as in the case of Desu Singh's tribute, one-fourth of Amar Singh's money would be paid to them.[5]

Abdul Ahad moved his camp towards Patiala on the 22nd September, and crossed the Sarasvati stream near Pehowa on the 23rd September. He encamped at Siyana Sayyidan (5 kms north of

[1]ibid, 256b.
[2]ibid, 253a-b.
[3]ibid, 254a.
[4]ibid, 257b.
[5]ibid, 257a.

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Pehowa). The vanguard of the imperial army consisting chiefly of Sikh auxiliaries plundered the neighbouring Patiala territory and drove away cattle.[1]

Diwan Nanumal made one more attempt to persuade Abdul Ahad to accept the tribute of Amar Singh and he placed before him banker's bills for five lakhs of rupees. Abdul Ahad insisted upon Amar Singh's personal interview and demanded thirty lakhs of rupees, and getting angry with the Diwan tore up the bills. Some of his Mughala troops and the Sikhs laid waste five villages of Amar Singh's territory. They besieged the fort of Saifabad (6 kms south of Patiala). The powder-magazine in the fort caught fire, and 300 persons of the garrison were burnt to death and wounded.[2]

On the 26th September, Baghel Singh and Karam Singh interviewed Abdul Ahad, and talked to him for a long time regarding Amar Singh's tribute; but no settlement was arrived at. Achal Singh, *Bakhshi* of Raja Amar Singh, joined the camp on that day. Dulaha Singh and Sher Singh were presented to the Nawab by Baghel Singh. They offered as *nazar* a horse and a bow each, and received a *khilat* of five pieces, a *sarpech* and a sword. At noon Taj Muhammad Khan represented that Desu Singh should be given congee. He was conducted to the presence, given a *khilat* of five pieces, a *sarpech*, a sword, a horse, and an elephant; while a few *doshalas* were given to his companions. Desu Singh begged guns from Majd-ud-daulah to expel his brother who had occupied a fort. Desu Singh's son Lal Singh was detained in the imperial camp as a hostage.[3]

On the 27th September the camp moved forward under the guidance of Raja Shiv Nath. Raja Amar Singh's *Bakhshi* was granted an interview, and he offered one cotton bed-sheet as *nazar*. Majd-ud-daulah asked him to write to Amar Singh to come into the presence and to save his country from desolation. The *Bakhshi* replied that Amar Singh would shortly wait on him.[4]

On the 28th September Abdul Ahad marched on to Ghuram (25 kms south of Patiala), which became the base of operations of imperial forces. Gajpat Singh's Diwan, Daya Singh, who had been

[1]Ibid, 257b, 258b.
[2]Ibid, 259b-60b.
[3]Ibid, 262a-63a.
[4]Ibid, 263a-b.

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sent to Amar Singh to negotiate, returned with the news that Amar Singh was willing to interview the Nawab. Raja Gajpat Singh and Nanumal told the Prince and the Nawab that if they guaranteed Raja Amar Singh's safety by swearing on the Koran they would persuade him to present himself before the Prince. Nawab Majd-ud-daulah gave them every assurance by swearing on the holy book. Both the chiefs left for the camp of Amar Singh. Majd-ud-daulah strictly forbade raids into Amar Singh's territory pending the settlement of the tribute. Raja Shambu Nath reported that Sikhs had already ravaged four of his villages.[1]

On the 29th September Baghel Singh, Achal Singh, Sada Singh, Gurdit Singh and Dulaha Singh, etc., waited on Majd-ud-daulah. The Nawab asked them to go to Patiala and bring Amar Singh to the camp. They replied: "Give us in full payment all the salary due to us up to to-day. Take muster of our new levies, and fix the amount of their pay. And then only shall we do whatever you command." Abdul Ahad promised payment after Amar Singh's arrival in the camp. Another body of the Sikhs which had gone towards Patiala was repulsed by Amar Singh's army and they retreated to the imperial camp.[2]

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On the 30th September a letter from Amar Singh was received by Majd-ud-daulah saying that he was deputing a trustworthy person to him to settle terms.[3] The same day arrived a letter from Gajpat Singh stating that he had persuaded Amar Singh to come to an audience on the 3rd October. The Nawab was so much elated at this news that he ordered his troops not to pick up any quarrel with Amar Singh's men. He appointed Sayyid Ali Khan, Taj Muhammad Khan and Raja Daya Ram to receive Raja Amar Singh at a distance from the camp.[4]

The 4th October was fixed as the day of interview with Raja Amar Singh, whose agents secured Majd-ud-daulah's signatures on various papers. Majd-ud-daulah ordered a *khilat* to be prepared for the Raja. He despatched Raja Shambu Nath to bring Amar Singh.[5]

On the 5th October letters came from Sayyid Ali Khan, Raja

[1]ibid, 263b-64a.
[2]ibid, 265b-66a.
[3]ibid, 261b.
[4]ibid, 263a.
[5]ibid, 265a-b.

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Daya Ram and Shambu Nath saying that they had by great entreaty induced Baghel Singh, Karam Singh, Sada Singh, etc. Sikh chiefs to accompany them to Patiala. They halted 9 kms on this side of Patiala. Raja Amar Singh provided them with food and sent word that it was the day of *shrādh* (feeding Brahmans in memory of the deceased) of his father, and that he would see them the following day. This day Amir Khan's infantry brought some Sikh horsemen who had committed highway robbery. Majd-ud-daulah censured them and confiscated their property. In the afternoon Bhag Singh and Bhagwant Singh, agents of the brother of Rae Kalha, waited upon the Prince. They were given a *khilat*, Rs. 5,000 in cash and shawls.[1] On the 7th October letters were written by the Emperor from Delhi under the royal seal to Tara Singh Ghaiba, Tara Singh Kakar, Raja of Nahan, and Rae Ahmad son of Rae Kalha, and they were sent to Majd-ud-daulah by Ghulam Ali Khan.

Raja Amar Singh first visited Taj Muhammad Khan. Then he went to Sayyid Ali Khan's[2] camp, where Shambu Nath and Gajpat Singh, etc., were present. They discussed the matter for a long time. In the end Raja Amar Singh proposed that he would interview the Prince and the Nawab the following day in the company of Rae Kalha.[3]

Amar Singh, had strong suspicions about his treatment in the imperial camp. Consequently, he was reluctant to comply with the demands of the Nawab. He pretended going to the Prince, but after having gone half-way he returned. Francklin rightly says that Amar Singh had no fear of the imperial army: "That place (Patiala) was defended by Amur Sing, who with a numerous garrison, and abundance of provisions, resolved to sustain a siege. Amur Sing, had, however, other motives for resistance; he was aware that a large reinforcement of Seiks had left Lahore, and might shortly be expected at Puttiali; nor was he without hope that even in the event of their non-arrival, and the town being hard pressed, but that he should be able to gain over the minister to his views by the aid of all-powerful gold."[4]

[1]ibid, 265a, 267a-b.

[2]Sayyid Ali Khan was the grandson of the famous Mir Jumla, and son-in-law of Majd-ud-daulah. (*Tarikh-e-Muzaffari*, 201b).

[3]*Akhbarat*, 268a.

[4]*Shah Aulum*, 87.

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Fight with the Raja of Patiala

Nothing but war was to decide the issue.[1] Abdul Ahad showed remarkable agility in sending a strong detachment to attack Patiala early in the morning of the 7th October. A great battle was fought on this day between the combined troops of Amar Singh and Tara Singh Ghaiba on the one hand and the imperial force on the other. In the day's hard fight the imperialists were victorious. Amar Singh and Tara Singh Ghaiba fell back and shut themselves up in the fort. The entire imperial force gathered and encamped 9 kms outside Patiala and laid siege to the town on the 8th October.[2]

Severe fighting continued on the 8th and the 9th of October; but Abdul Ahad could not make any effect on the garrison. The Prince pressed the minister to deliver an immediate assault, but the timid Nawab had no heart to do so. His failure to take the fort at once turned the tables against him. His own followers became restless and discontented. They thought that the minister was playing a losing game, and so they wanted to assure themselves of their arrears of pay. "Mutinies broke out in our army from the enmity between the Mughals and the Afghans, the latter being instigated by Zabita Khan. Ghazi Khan and Alam Khan, etc. refused to fight as there was no money to pay them. Hurmat Khan, the chief noble on whom the minister had heaped various favours and concessions, and who always proclaimed himself as the most faithful servant, revolted. After Tara Singh Ghaiba had joined Amar Singh, most of the Sikh *Sardars* lately engaged by the Nawab, suddenly deserted him,[3] being lured away by Amar Singh's gold."[4]

A little earlier Amar Singh had invited the Majha Sikhs under the leadership of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, and they at once responded to the call. "Jassa Singh was at Batala. When he got the news, he immediately wrote to Sikh *Sardars* that they should not delay any longer, as Abdul Ahad had marched from Delhi into their country. Jai Singh, Hakikat Singh, Trilok Singh, Amar Singh

[1] *Tarikh-e-Muzaffari*, 201b accuses Amar Singh of a treacherous design to capture Sayyid Ali Khan.

[2] *Akhbarat*, 270a; Khair-ud-din, II, 4.

[3] Miskin (present), 341; Munna Lal, 219.

[4] Ghulam Ali, II, 134; Khair-ud-din, II 5; Sarkar, III, 181-2.

At this time Majd-ud-daulah asked the Delhi Court for a supply of 2,000 English muskets, and 5,000 coats, elephants and tents. (*C.P.C.*, V, 1643.)

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Bagha, Amar Singh Kingra and other Kanhiya *Sardars* came to the same place and the camp was fixed at Achal. Ramgarhias fought with them and two of their places were taken. Then they came to Sathiala, and marching stage by stage crossed the Satluj at *Talwan-ka-patan*. Here they were joined by Sada Singh, Tara Singh Kakar, Mohar Singh Nishanwala and his brother Anup Singh."[1]

Retreat of the Imperial army

When the news of the approach of this army rumoured to be two[2] lakhs in number, reached the weak-willed[3] Nawab, his heart sank within him. He consulted Baghel Singh who frightened him of the formidable force under Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, then encamped at Malerkotla. Abdul Ahad at once decided upon a speedy retreat and told Baghel Singh that he had been asked by the Emperor to return to Delhi. Baghel Singh approved of this course. ***Bute Shah***, 282a, says that Baghel Singh suggested to the Nawab to bribe the Majha Sikh chiefs before the minister's flight to Delhi to escape plunder at their hands during his retreat. Abdul Ahad being terrified at once gave him three lakhs of rupees that he had realised from Desu Singh. Baghel Singh paid Rs 10,000 to Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Rs 5,000 to Tara Singh Ghaiba, and Rs 7,000 to Jai Singh Kanhiya, while the rest of the money was appropriated to himself.[4] Jassa Singh ordered his followers to make the best of the minister's flight: "I have heard that the Nawab is about to retreat. If he does so, you should give him no quarter."[5]

Abdul Ahad began his retreat early in the morning of the 14th October,[6] 1779. The Sikhs fell in pursuit of the imperial forces from the neighbourhood of Patiala, plundering goods, horses and on whatever they could lay their hands. Abdul Ahad sitting on an elephant encouraged his soldiers all the day. His Sikh allies who had not deserted him at Patiala helped him greatly by fighting against their own brethren.[7] His artillery served greatly in repelling

[1] *Jassa Singh Binod* (Gurmukhi), 220.
[2] Ghulam Ali, II, 134, but 60,000 according to Tarikh-e-Muzaffari, 201b.
[3] Khair-ud-din, II, 5.
[4] *The Rajas of the Punjab*, 52-3; Gian Singh, 956.
[5] *Jassa Singh Binod*, 220.
[6] *Delhi Chronicle*, 321; Munna Lal, 219 wrongly puts it on 19 October.
[7] *Delhi Chronicle*, 322.

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the Sikh attacks.[1]

Miserable plight of Abdul Ahad

Francklin describes the miserable plight of Abdul Ahad's troops thus: "The Sikhs now made a violent attack on all sides; accustomed to a desultory mode of warfare, they charged the line in several parts at once, and by the fierceness of their onset, threw the King's troops into confusion. The whole army would now have been sacrificed had not the officer who commanded in the rear, by a well-directed fire of his artillery, given a timely check to the enemy. The King's troops were, however, compelled to retire; and for four days made a disgraceful and disorderly retreat.[2] On the fifth day (18th October), the army reached Panniput under the walls of which they encamped. Here the Seiks quitted them."[3]

Above all the presence of the Prince in the army proved most effective in saving the soldiery from destruction, as is testified by Sir Jadunath Sarkar: "The Prince's presence undoubtedly proved the salvation of the Mughal army. The glamour of the imperial name had not yet totally disappeared, and the Sikhs shrank from going to an extreme in their attack on Padishah's son, contenting themselves with loot only. If Abdul Ahad had been alone, he would not have returned alive from this ill-judged and ill-conducted invasion."[4]

The only achievement of this expedition was that Abdul Ahad succeeded in bringing with him Desu Singh's son Lal Singh who had been detained in the imperial camp as a hostage.[5] On the way fighting and firing guns, with a thousand humiliations and difficulties, suffering from hunger and thirst, he arrived at Panipat in a miserable condition.

[1]Khair-ud-din, II, 5; Munna Lal, 219-20.

[2]Miskin (present), 342: "Fighting and shooting on the way and facing thousands of trials and troubles, hungry and thirsty, and suffering terribly, they again arrived at Karnal and encamped there."

[3]*Shah Aulum*, 89.

[4]Sarkar, III, 182, f.n.

[5]Ghulam Ali, III, 131-6; Jonathan Scott, II, 268-9; *Zikar-e-Mir*, 1327; Bakhtmal, 109-16; Francklin, 86-90; *Siyar*, III, 85, 86, 110, III; Bute Shah, 281a-282b; *Raj Khalsa*, II, 29-30 ;Gian Singh, 955-56.

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CHAPTER 8

Wealth and Vendetta not Dominions, November, 1779-February, 1781

Plunder and not political power was the aim

The ignoble and humiliating retreat of Abdul Ahad Khan from Patiala in October, 1779 left the Sikhs masters of the situation. The possession of Delhi lay in sight. Najaf Khan was away to the south at the head of his army containing some of his most trusted officers and troops. Further he had no money in the treasury, and revenues could not be raised on account of disturbances on all sides. No other general was capable of checking the Sikh aggression in case of their attack on the imperial capital. Had the Sikhs advanced upon Delhi, it would have fallen into their hands like a ripe fruit. In that event they would have become protectors of the Emperor and would have easily established their sway up to the confluence of the Ganga and Jamuna at Allahabad, including Rohilkhand, the country of the Jats of Bharatpur extending to the river Chambal, Rajasthan, Sind, Panjab, Kashmir and the Shiwalik Hills. Thus India would have been divided into three independent zones; the eastern zone under the British, southern zone under the Marathas and the north-western zone under the Sikhs.

Unluckily they possessed no far-sightedness. Their eyes were dazzled by the glitter of gold and they had no desire to possess territory outside the limits of the Panjab. Hence their glory lay in plunder and not in acquisition of territory.

Fall of Abdul Ahad Khan

After giving up the pursuit of the imperial general at Panipat, they were not prepared to come back home without a rich booty in the form of money and jewellery. The most fertile field for their plundering activities was the Ganga Doab which was lying defen-

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celess. It was to this region that they turned their attention. "Unsatiable with success," says Francklin, "and fiercely thirsting for plunder, they divided into separate columns, and crossing the Jumna, spread themselves over the upper parts of the Doab, committing every where acts of cruelty, devastation and death."[1]

The Emperor issued urgent orders to Najaf Khan for his immediate return. On hearing this Abdul Ahad hurriedly retreated to Delhi, where he arrived on the 5th November, 1779. He soon won the confidence of the Emperor, and at his suggestion the Emperor rescinded his orders for the recall of Najaf Khan who was now only two marches away from Delhi. Najaf, however, continued his advance. His lieutenant Afrasiyab Khan drove away Abdul Ahad's men from the fort and appointed his own soldiers in their places. Najaf won over Ahad's captains and troops. On the 15th November, 1779, he ousted Ahad in spite of the Emperor's best efforts to save his favourite. Najaf afterwards offered a large tribute to the Emperor who appointed him to the supreme command in all the departments of state.

Shafi is given charge of the expedition against the Sikhs

Najaf was not going to sleep over the lawless activities of the Sikhs. As soon as he established his position, he tried to put vigour into the decaying body-politic of the Empire. He appointed his grand-nephew, Mirza Shafi, in charge of a regular campaign against the Sikhs in the Upper Doab in January, 1780. He was provided with a select force of 10,000[2] and a strong park of artillery.

Shafi set himself to the task in right earnest. He set up his headquarters at Meerut, and from this base organised several expeditions against the Sikhs. They withdrew before him, not going very far from his camp, and by their guerilla tactics gave him a hard time.

Shafi had another menace to combat. The zamindars had thrown off their allegiance to the Delhi Government and were using the Sikh incursions as a pretext for non-payment of their revenue dues. In order to defy the authority of the Mughal officers they had thrown up mud forts everywhere. Shafi sent several expeditionary forces against them. One of these was led against the rebellious village of Sup (45 kms north-west of Meerut), which

[1]Francklin, 89.
[2]Francklin in his *Shah Aulum*, p, 93 puts this number at 12,000.

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was sacked on the 10th February, 1780.[1]

Najaf Khan advises a defensive campaign

On the 15th February Shafi marched from Meerut to Kandhla (5 kms north-west), where he found a large muster of the Sikhs. Shafi invited help from Delhi. Najaf Khan only lent the support of his name by declaring that he would march to punish the Sikhs when his artillery arrived at Delhi. On the 21st February intimation was received from Shafi that Dulaha Singh at the head of 500 horse was lying encamped on the banks of the Jamuna about 20 kms distant. In view of these threatening forces Najaf Khan issued instructions to Shafi on the 28th February: "Do not advance farther and never interfere with the Sikhs who intend marching towards Saharanpur." On the 29th February he again wrote to Shafi: "Fight if the Sikhs come to oppose you, otherwise do not take the initiative yourself." Najaf promised to march to his sasistance by 2nd April.[2]

The Sikhs intimidate Aman Khan

Farther north in the districts of Muzaffarnagar and Saharanpur Aman Khan, deputy of Zabita Khan, was facing an equally serious situation created by the Sikhs. On the 7th February, 1780, he summoned Hari Singh of Khaonli (?) and requested him to lend him the use of his fort where he wanted to keep his womenfolk for safety. From there he marched and encamped at Badli eight *kos* distant. Here he received the report of the approach of Bhag Singh and Bhanga Singh to Jamalgarh.

At Basehra (18 kms north-east of Muzaffarnagar) on the 10th February Diwan Singh Lang with forty horsemen waited upon Aman Khan. The Khan told him that he was bound for Deoband (20 kms north-west), where he should see him. When Diwan Singh was keeping him engaged in settling the terms of peace, a body of Sikhs plundering Muzaffarnagar district crossed the Ganga near Daranagar (45 kms south-east of Muzaffarnagar), and collected blackmail.

On the 22nd February Anand Singh, a colleague of Rae Singh

[1]In order to win the support of the local zamindars against the Sikhs Shafi remitted all the revenues that were due during the period of the Sikh invasion. (*Meerut District Gazetteer*, 157)

[2]British Museum, *Persian Akhbarat*, Or 25020, I, 15a, 17b, 28b, 38b.

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of Jagadhri, sought audience of Aman Khan, delivered to him Rae Singh's letter, and told him that a large body of the Sikhs was about to cross the Jamuna. Shortly afterwards the Sikhs entered the Saharanpur district. Aman Khan summoned Anand Singh on the 27th February and said: "Write to the Sikhs on your behalf to the effect that your men are already realizing blackmail everywhere. Why have you come? It would be proper if you recross the Jamuna." Aman Khan persuaded Anand Singh to visit Rae Singh, the leader of the fresh expedition, and to induce him to retire to his own country.

On the 28th February the Sikhs approached the camp of Aman Khan who warned his men to remain on their guard inside the camp. Finding that Aman Khan was afraid of them, the Sikh leaders including Dulaha Singh, Rae Singh and Charas Singh, retired towards Gangoh (40 kms west), on the 1st March. The same day Aman Khan received an application from Abdullah Khan the officer of Saharanpur saying: "If you come here with your army, money will be realized from the people; otherwise, as the Sikhs are roaming about this place, all the revenues will be lost."[1]

On the 2nd March Aman Khan received a letter from Nahar Singh Gujar, advising him to compel the Sikhs to retire across the Jamuna, as only in that event could revenue be collected from the people. On the 4th March letters from Rae Singh and Dulcha Singh addressed to Aman Khan announced their intention of proceeding to Hardwar to bathe in the Ganga. On the 5th March Charas Singh visited Aman Khan, and held long discussions regarding the terms of the peace settlement. The same day Sahu Khan's petition came from Manglaur (20 kms north-east of Deoband) declaring that revenue could not be collected owing to the disturbances of the Sikhs.[2]

The Sikh Rajas court the Wazir

Shafi's campaign in the Doab against the Sikhs gave an opportunity to the Sikh rajas and other big chiefs to gain the favour of the imperial court by holding out hopes of their support against their co-religionists. About the end of January, 1780, the *vakil* of Amar

[1]As this was not the harvest time, these charges may be in connection with the yield of products from sugarcane.

[2]Or, 25020, folios 5b, 11a, 23b, 32a, 35a, 37a-38b, 40a-41b, 43a, 46b, 48a-b.

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Singh of Patiala arrived at Delhi, and on behalf of his master offered submission. When he wanted to take leave on the 9th February, he was informed that a *khilat* was being prepared for the Raja and that he must wait till it was ready. Similarly, the *vakil* of Raja Jassa Singh of Kapurthala, attended the court on the 12th February. He was granted a *doshala*, while a *sanad* of *jagir* was issued for his master under the seal of Zahur-ul-Nisa Begam. On the 15th February Najaf Khan received a letter from Baghel Singh. On the 16th Februray two letters came from Baghel Singh and Jassa Singh (Ramgarhia?) stating that they intended to visit the court to settle terms through Muhammad Beg Hamdani.

On the 20th February Zabita Khan presented the *vakils* of Raja Amar Singh to Najaf Khan at a private audience in the latter's palace. The Wazir examined two *khilats* prepared for Amar Singh and Gajpat Singh, two for the *vakils* and two *khilats* for the daughters of Amar Singh and Hamir Singh of Nabha. At the same time one *doshala* with a *goshwara* (an embroidered cloth worn as an ornament over the sides of a turban) was presented to each of the *vakils* of Gurdit Singh and Chain Singh for their masters. One *doshala* was granted for Sadullah Khan, the Nawab of Malerkotla, while three *doshalas* were given to his *vakils* for Desu Singh.

On the 22nd February Maulvi Muhammad Ikram, an agent of the Sikhs, sought audience through Mian Qambar, and offered a rosary by way of *nazar*. On the 23rd February four letters for Amar Singh, Gajpat Singh, Sadullah Khan and Muhammad Khan Afghan were given to Zabita Khan for speedy despatch. On the 28th February Najaf Khan handed over to Sahib Singh, agent of Zabita Khan, the *khilats* for Amar Singh, Gajpat Singh, Sadullah Khan and others including several *doshalas* for their relatives and courtiers for immediate disposal. Addressing various agents the Wazir remarked that he would send something more from the Emperor.[1]

Shafi recruits Sikhs in his army

After this no news-letters are available until September.[2] It seems clear that Mirza Shafi held his ground in the Meerut district, and passed the rainy season there. At the end of the rains some Sikh

[1]ibid, 7a, 12a, 18b, 26b-27b, 29a, 31b, 37a; Francklin, 95.
[2]This account in the newsletters runs only from 7 February to 5 March, 1780.

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chiefs waited on Najaf Khan, and offered their services to fight in the imperial army against the Sikh invaders of the Doāb. Several factors were responsible for such a strange behaviour. Some wanted to get at the secrets of the imperial forces, to study their weak points carefully, and later to use them to their advantage. Some wisned to retain the favour of the Wazir and the General to secure favourable terms in case of the defeat of their brethren. Others might have been goaded by jealousy. On the 14th September, 1780 three Sikh chiefs together with their followers were sent to Shafi under the guidance of Ror Singh and Harjas Singh commandants. Shafi was directed to employ the Sikh chiefs each on a salary of Rs. 100 per mensem and a Sikh trooper at the rate of twelve annas per day. He was instructed to recruit all the Sikhs offering to join him on that scale of pay.

Intestine warfare among the Sikhs

At this time complete anarchy was prevailing in the Cis-Satluj country, and intestine warfare was going on among the Sikhs. The Persian news-letters provide us a glimpse into this state of affairs. On the 8th February, 1780, Raja Amar Singh left Patiala to attend the marriage of the daughter of Hamir Singh of Nabha. His luggage was following him at some distance. Karam Singh Nirmala who lay encamped at Bazidpur, five *kos* from Patiala, with seven or eight thousand horse, plundered his baggage on the 15th February. Sahib Singh and other Sikhs crossed the Satluj for Lahore and Raja Shambu Nath laid waste the town of Muhammadpur. The Raja retired to Kot. On the 17th February Desu Singh and Jassa Singh advanced towards Patiala. Raja Amar Singh came out to oppose them. In a fierce fight that ensued many soldiers were killed and wounded. At last Amar Singh entered his fort and the Sikhs plundered the environs of Patiala. The Sikhs besieged him, and the siege seems to have continued till the end of the month, as the besiegers retired towards Sarhind on the 29th February. On the 1st March Bhag Singh's letter arrived at the court. It announced that Gurbakhsh Singh, Budha Singh, Karam Singh and Sahib Singh were all united against Raja Amar Singh and were demanding money from him. On the 3rd March Jai Singh Kanhiya came to Patiala to celebrate the marriage of Jaimal Singh with Bibi Sahib Kaur.[1] After the marriage Jai Singh and Amar Singh decided to

[1]Or, 25021, folios 4a, 5b.

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despatch 10,000 selected horse against the Sikhs mentioned above. No news-letters are available after this until September.

On the 15th September Sahib Singh, the *vakil* of Zabita Khan, submitted to Najaf Khan some letters from certain Sikh chiefs. After perusing them the Wazir said that Dulaha Singh and Baghel Singh with 6,000 horse were fighting against Diwan Singh, who had begged for aid from him and Zabita Khan. Bhag Singh, Bhanga Singh and Sahib Singh Khondah had joined Diwan Singh, Sahib Singh suggested that Mirza Shafi and Aman Khan should be directed to co-operate with Diwan Singh, and on the defeat of the other party imperial military posts should be established in their territories.[1] So momentous was the effect of the civil war among the Sikhs on the imperial court that the Mughal nobles now considered it practicable to take charge of crownlands in Karnal district. They wanted to achieve success by playing off one party against the other.

On the 16th September, Najaf Quli Khan attended a feast given by Raja Himmat Bahadur. The Khan told the Raja that he intended to take a body of the Sikhs in his service.

The same day Najaf Quli requested Najaf Khan to grant him the districts of Karnal, Panipat, Jind and Gohana in *jagir*. The Wazir replied that after consulting Opat astrologer he would inform him.

On the 18th September Diwan Singh, Sahib Singh Khondah, Bhanga Singh and Bhag Singh of Buriya, with 4,000 horse and four pieces of cannon were lying encamped at Mustafabad. On the other side were Baghel Singh, Sada Singh, Dulaha Singh, Karam Singh Shahid, Gurbakhsh Singh, Lal Singh and Karam Singh Nirmala, all of whom with 6,800 horse were staying at another village nearby.[2] Skirmishes were going on between the two parties. That day Diwan Singh and Sahib Singh again sought help from Najaf Khan requesting him to send Zabita Khan, and promising in return to help the Wazir whenever he would require their services. On the 20th October it was recorded at Delhi that Amar Singh and Gajpat Singh were not on good terms and Diwan Singh and Rae Singh were plundering their country.

[1]Muhammad Hasan, pp. 103-7 says that this marriage took place in February, 1778.

[2]This village is written as Haksianwala or Hakimanwala(?).

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Lal Singh of Kaithal released

It may be recalled that during Abdul Ahad's Patiala campaign in September, 1779, Desu Singh's son, Lal Singh, had been detained in the imperial camp as a hostage to clear off the arrears of tribute. Desu Singh died in September, 1780 and his wife sent her agents to Najaf Khan to secure the release of her son. It was reported to Najaf Khan on the 22nd September, 1780 that Amar Singh threatened her for negotiating directly with the Delhi Court. The second wife of Desu Singh at the instigation of Amar Singh seized all the money and property and expressed no desire for the release of Lal Singh. Najaf demanded Rs. 50,000 as ransom. Lal Singh's mother having no cash was feeling exasperated at her co-wife, who was withholding all money and jewellery. Desperate as she was, one day she went to her place, seized her by the neck and holding a dagger to her stomach cried out that unless she released and called back her son, she would kill her. The co-wife paid her 1,000 *Mohars* (Rs. 20,000) and promised to pay Rs. 20,000 more. The balance of Rs. 10,000 was raised by subscription.

On the 4th October Najaf Khan placed Desu Singh's son in the custody of Najaf Quli with authority to liberate him for Rs. 50,000. Shortly afterwards Darbarimal applied to the Wazir that if he would delay the release of Lal Singh by ten days, he would secure twenty thousand rupees more as ransom. The Nawab got back Lal Singh from Najaf Quli in spite of the latter's protests. Shivram pleaded for Najaf Quli Khan pressing for the release of Lal Singh for fifty thousand rupees. Najaf Quli was sullen and dejected. The Nawab tried to cheer him up, and ultimately agreed to the desire of Najaf Quli.

Desu Singh's wife remitted fifty thousand rupees early in November, 1780, and Najaf Quli with the permission of Najaf Khan set Lal Singh free on the 11th November, 1780. Ishar Singh was ordered to supply the bodyguard and to deliver him up safely at Kaithal.

Th e Sikhs ravage Nawab of Oudh's territory

In spite of the civil strife certain Sikh chiefs were raiding the upper Doāb. On the 21st September Shafi's letter announced that Gurdit Singh with 200 horse crossed the Jamuna by way of Tanda and laid waste four villages belonging to Zabita Khan. Other Sihk chiefs were also penetrating into the Doāb. Some of them managed to reach the Ganga. On the 11th October, 1780, it was reported to

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Najaf Khan that a Sikh force of about 4,000 horse under the guidance of Nahar Singh Gujar crossed the Ganga into the Najibabad and Bijnor districts and drove away cattle from several villages. Najaf Khan issued orders to Aman Khan to hold them in check and informed him that Zabita Khan was about to leave for Ghausgarh to deal with the situation.

Zabita Khan's movements

At Shafi's urgent requests Najaf Khan allowed Zabita Khan to leave Delhi on the 21st October with strict instructions to assist Shafi in his war with the Sikhs. On the 25th October news came that Zabita Khan had reached Chhaprauli (65 kms north of Delhi near the Jamuna). He was going to Tanda Ghat on the eastern bank of the Jamuna, 23 kms south-east of Panipat, where Shafi was to meet him to discuss the plans of action.

The same day it was reported that two Sikh chiefs from Ambala waited on Sultan Khan at Ghausgarh, and each of them presented two bed-spreads and one Lahore bow. They were awarded one *doshala* and a horse each.

On the 26th October it was recorded that Murtaza Khan Bharaich, another lieutenant of Mirza Shafi, lay encamped at Madhopur, and intended to punish Dalel Singh and Debi Singh Sikhs, etc.

On the 27th October Zabita Khan's news-letter announced that he had reached Tanda and that he had written to Sahib Singh, Diwan Singh, Sada Singh and Gurdit Singh and others to see him there.

Shafi was halting in a village six *kos* north of Kairana. The zamindars of the place reported that at a distance of three *kos* from Bidauli there was a village of Gujars who were in league with the Sikhs, and were committing depredations everywhere. Besides many cattle which had recently been lifted by the Sikhs were still present in that village and ten or twelve Sikhs were staying with them. Shafi attacked the village, and the Sikhs having fled the zamindars of the place were arrested and the people plundered. On the 30th October, Moti Ram and Bhawani Das, the *vakils* of Amar Singh and Gajpat Singh were granted *doshalas* and given congee. On the 2nd November Najaf Khan told Sahib Singh, *vakil* of Zabita Khan, that if Raja Amar Singh asked for his master's intervention against Sahib Singh Khondah, etc., he should win over the latter, and then extract money from Amar Singh.

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This plan was not practicable. Zabita Khan and Shafi were both young men of hot temperament, and could not get on well together. There was no love lost between an Irani and an Afghan owing to national hostility. Zabita Khan's estates were situated in Saharanpur and Muzaffarnagar districts. These lands were frequently raided by Sikhs. Zabita Khan did not wish to give an excuse to the Sikhs to ravage his territory by openly fighting against them. Besides the Sikhs had been his old allies, and he might have to fall back upon their support in a future emergency.

On the 4th November Zabita Khan's letter stated that Sahib Singh, Diwan Singh, Baghel Singh and Sada Singh were lying encamped between Karnal and Thanesar; and that he was arranging for a meeting with them.

Zabita Khan advanced from Kairana to Bidauli, and Shafi was to follow him. On the following day Diwan Singh and Karam Singh Shahid with 1,500 horse crossed the Jamuna at Kunjpura, and encamped on the opposite bank of the river in the Doāb at *Ghat* Makanak. Zabita Khan was five *kos* away from them. He deputed his *vakil* Bilas Rae to negotiate with the Sikhs. He also summoned Afzal Khan and Sultan Khan from Ghausgarh to help him in negotiating with the Sikhs.

On the 5th November Bilas Rae brought Diwan Singh, Mohar Singh and Karam Singh Shahid to the camp of Zabita Khan at Bidauli (16 kms south-east of Karnal). Shafi was still at Kairana; but he joined Zabita Khan two days later. Diwan Singh presented the Nawab with a horse, a pair of bed-sheets and a Lahore bow; while the other *sardars* offered a bow and a pair of bed-sheets each. Zabita Khan held consultation with them for three quarters of an hour. Then the arrival of Afzal Khan and Sultan Khan from Ghausgarh was announced. Zabita Khan put up the Sikh chiefs with Gulab Gujar, and himself received his lieutenants. Conferences with the Sikhs continued till the 9th November, when Dulaha Singh of Radaur and Rae Singh of Buriya also crossed the Jamuna to participate in the discussions.

The Sikh parties ask for Zabita's assistance

Meanwhile the internecine fighting among the Sikhs was continuing unabated. On the 9th November a pair of couriers from Thanesar announced that Sahib Singh Khondah, Dulaha Singh, Bhag Singh and other Sikhs went to Thanesar to oust Bhanga

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Singh. They were opposed by Bhala Singh and Loha Singh from inside the city. Eventually Bhala Singh took shelter in the fort of Thanesar; while Loha Singh fled towards Kaithal. The invaders established their rule in the suburb of the city. Sahib Singh with 2,000 horse went in pursuit of Loha Singh to Kaithal. Several Sikh chiefs asked Zabita Khan to help them in expelling Desu Singh's sons from Kaithal and to acknowledge their rule over Thanesar. Shafi said to Zabita Khan: "They are all faithless. Set one party against the other, and see whether they fight or not. Put them all to fight amongst themselves."[1]

A message received this day stated that Mehar Singh was levying contribution in Patiala territory which was also being plundered by Bhattis.

Gajpat Singh of Jind imprisoned

Shafi and Zabita Khan decided to take advantage of the divided forces of the Sikhs. About the end of November they crossed the Jamuna and took up their position at Kunjpura. Gajpat Singh of Jind, the most loyal chief in the Cis-Satluj territory, waited upon them. On the 8th December Shafi imprisoned him along with three other Sikh chiefs, and tried to extract a large sum of money from them. Zabita Khan protested against this unfair treatment meted to his majesty's loyal subjects. When Shafi paid no heed to his entreaties and threats, Zabita Khan left for Delhi on the 10th December to bring it to the notice of Najaf Khan.[2]

Shafi's fight with the Sikhs near Saharanpur

Shafi was left all alone to fight with the Sikhs. He maintained his ground at Kunjpura for two months. Early in February, 1781, the Sikhs entered the Doāb and spread over a large area causing destruction everywhere, particularly in Manglaur *parganah*. Shafi made a forced march from Kunjpura, and approached Saharanpur at a time when the Sikh troops were scattered about. Whatever Sikh troops were present near Shafi's camp, fell upon him on the 20th February, and "offered battle in the full confidence of victory, and contempt for the imperial forces." But Shafi's well-directed artillery and disciplined sepoy musketeers proved more than a

[1]Bute Shah, 253a.
[2]*Dilliyethil*, I, 20.

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match for their formidable adversaries. The famous Sikh leader Sahib Singh Khondah was slain, and several other chiefs were wounded. At last the Sikhs left the battle-field and fled towards their homes. Shafi pursued them so closely that while crossing the Jamuna many Sikhs were drowned in the river.[1]

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[1]British Museum, *Persian Akhbarat*, Or. 25021, folios 2a, 14b, 294a, 295b, 299a, 309a, 310a, 311a, 313a, 319a-b, 320b, 321b, 323b, 324a, 331a, 341a-b, 349a, 358a, 362a, 364b, 368b, 369a, 376b, 377a, 389a b; *Delhi Chronicle*, 328; Munna Lal, 227-28; Sarkar, III, 215-16; Francklin in *Shah Aulum*, pp. 93-94, while describing this event in full says that this battle took place at Meerut on 15 August, 1781, and that the Sikhs lost about 5,000 men. G.R.C. Williams in *Calcutta Review*, LX, 1875, p. 35, and *Meerut District Gazetteer*, p. 157, borrowed all the details from Francklin.

Other contemporary authorities while narrating events of mid-August make no mention of this battle. British Museum, *Persian Akhbarat*, Or. 25021, folio 201a records on 13 August, 1781: "Mirza Shafi's newsletters arrived. It was written that he was stationed as before and the Sikhs also lay encamped as before." The folios 204b-5a, while mentioning events of 18 August, 1781, make no reference to this battle. Rajwade, XII, 33; *Dilliyethil*, I, 44, 47, 49, 50, 51, 53, 59, all dated 15 August, 1781, have nothing to say about this event. The loss of 5,000 men in one battle is staggering, and it must have been mentioned among the events that occurred in that week.

Sarup Lal's statement that Sahib Singh Khondah was killed in an action with Shafi at Buddha Khera near Karnal is wrong (*Dastur-ul-amal*, 120).

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CHAPTER 9

Imperial Campaign Against The Sikhs, February to June, 1781

Shafi crossed into the Cis-Satluj country

On the heels of the running Sikhs Shafi returned to the Sikh country in the Karnal district. The Sikhs decided to fight with him by adopting guerrilla tactics. In order to harass him further and to show that his victory did not deter them from invading the Doāb they led frequent plundering raids across the Jamuna.[1]

On the 25th February Shafi encamped at Radaur (43 kms north of Karnal and 13 kmsw est of the Jamuna). He was attacked by 150 Sikh horse, who after some time fled away. On the 27th February when the Mirza was still there the Sikhs cantoned four *kos* distant. Shafi received a letter from Diwan Singh and Baghel Singh saying that as owing to his presence in that quarter crops were being ruined, he would be held responsible for their losses.

Camp at Sikandra

On the 28th February Shafi broke up his camp at Radaur. On the way he was attacked by the Sikhs. About seventy men were killed and wounded on both sides. The inhabitants of the neighbourhood fled to the adjacent hills of Sirmur. Baghel Singh was staying at a distance of four *kos* from the Mirza.

On the 3rd March at the advice of Dalel Khan, Shafi decided to fix his camp at Sikandra. The imperial troops had marched only 8 kms. when the Sikhs attacked them. Mirza Zain-ul-Abidin, brother of Shafi, and Bagha Rao Maratha fought well. Then the Sikhs fled away. In this running fight eight horses of the Sikhs fell into the hands of the gallant soldiers while the Sikhs carried off

[1]This forms the subject of the following chapter.

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two camels and six ponies. About twenty persons of both sides were killed and wounded.

Encampment at Nikobat

On the 4th March Shafi marched to Buriya Nikobat[?], the place of residence of Rae Singh and Bhag Singh. Many skirmishes took place on the way. At midday the Mirza arrived near his destination, where he pitched his camp. The Sikhs encamped 10 kms. away. All the Sikhs of Nikobat fled with their families and property to Jamalgarh.

Shafi stayed at Nikobat for about a week, and daily skirmishes occurred with the Sikhs. On the 6th March Shafi received a few cart and cattle-loads of ammunition from Najaf Khan. The Sikhs thereupon transferred their camp about 16 kms away from the Mirza. On the 7th March it was reported to the Mirza that Diwan Singh's *vakil* visited Sher Din Khan, and stated on oath never to raid the Ganga Doāb if Shafi would return to his country immediately.

The ryots of the Sikh territory had taken refuge at Nakum-Tabar.[1] Ghulam Qadir, son of Zabita Khan, attacked both these places, and acquired much booty. He afterwards joined Shafi.

On the morning of the 9th March Zain-ul-Abidin Khan took up his position of guarding the camp. Some Sikh troopers tried to seize cattle of the imperial camp. In the action that followed four or five persons were killed and wounded. In the afternoon the Sikhs again appeared only one *kos* away from Shafi's camp. The Mirza at once marched at the head of a battalion with three pieces of cannon. A fierce fight was the result. After a time the Sikhs bolted off leaving twenty-five men dead. Shafi pursued them for three *kos* and then returned.

March to Buriya

Shafi decided to break up his camp in the morning of the 12th March. The Sikhs attacked him in the night between the 11th and the 12th March, and carried off 3,000 cattle. The following morning Shafi marched towards Buriya. The Sikhs attacked him on the way; but they were dispersed by artiliery fire. At noon he encamped at village Nakri[?].

[1]Nakum is situated on the western bank of the Jamuna and Tabar on the eastern bank just opposite, 26 kms. west of Saharanpur.

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Submission of Raja Amar Singh

Finding Mirza Shafi in difficulties Raja Amar Singh, following the traditional policy of the Patiala house, offered his assistance against the Sikhs to the imperial general. On the 17th March, 1781, Chain Singh, the Patiala representative, waited upon Shafi. He was granted a *doshala* [a piece of inferior shawl] and a *goshwara*, a jewelled ornament for the turban; while a *khilat* of five pieces was handed over to him for Raja Amar Singh. He was dismissed with an order to bring money and reinforcements for the Mirza.

On the 25th March Chain Singh's letter was received stating that Raja Amar Singh's troops had left Patiala and were marching towards Ambala. But these troops were not allowed by the Sikhs to join Shafi. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia invaded the Patiala territory on the 28th March; while Karam Singh and Tara Singh Ghaiba intercepted the progress of Amar Singh's contingent, and other Sikhs blocked its way at Ambala. The Raja was thus obliged to recall it. Jassa Singh and other Sikhs, continued to plunder Patiala territory. The *vakil* of Raja Amar Singh offered them money, and in consequence they retired towards Malerkotla and later to Khanna where Amar Singh agreed to visit Jassa Singh to settle terms for peace.[1]

At Khārvan and Balchhappar

Shafi was at Buriya, and the Sikh camp was at Khārvan (5 kms. north of Buriya). On the morning of the 18th March Shafi marched to Kharvan; but the Sikhs vacated the place and encamped three *kos* farther. On the way Shafi was attacked by a body of Sikhs; but they were driven away by artillery fire.

On the 19th March Shafi left Khārvan for Bālchhappar on the bank of the Chittang stream (11 kms. north-west of Jagadhri), where the Sikhs were halting. The Sikhs fell back a little farther.

It was recorded that there was disunion in the Sikh camp. This was the reason why the Sikhs were only harassing but not striking at Shafi's forces. Diwan Singh and Gurdit Singh left the Sikh camp and retired towards Sikandra owing to certain differences with other Sikh chiefs.

[1]British Museum, *Persian Akhbarat*, Or. 25021, folios 16a-b, 17a-b, 19a-b, 20a, 22a-b, 24a, 25a, 371b; Or. 25020, folios 69b. 97a.

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On the 21st March Raja Gajpat Singh of Jind promised to pay the balance of his tribute in a week's time. He as well as his *Diwan* was granted a *doshala* and a *goshwara*.

Fall of Mustafabad and Sadhaura

On the 23rd March Mir Mansur at the head of a strong contingent established military posts at Mustafabad (19 kms west of Buriya), and Sadhaura (on Nakti stream, 10 kms south of the hills and 37 kms east of Ambala). Baghel Singh's son marched from Sikandra, and tried to recapture Mustafabad; but he failed in the attempt and returned.

Disaffection in Shafi's army

On the 24th March Shafi decided to transfer his camp from Bālchhappar. The messengers reported that the best place for encampment was near the village Birpur on the road to Shahabad.

Ghulam Qadir was in a dejected mood owing to non-payment of his troops by Shafi. Shafi visited him in his camp and tried to console him. At departure he presented him with five trays of apparel including a fine turban and two horses. Sixty cart-loads and sixty horse-loads of grain, and two cart-loads of gunpowder arrived in the camp from Sadhaura, but the *Banjaras*[1] carrying grain on pack-oxen were plundered by Mohar Singh.

On the 25th March Shafi moved from Bālchhappar and encamped at a village 2 kms from Mustafabad. This place had been quitted by the Sikhs after handing over the fort to the local *Qazi*.

Shafi appointed Sher Din Khan Mandal officer of Shahabad. A letter was addressed to the Raja of Nahan asking him not to allow any shelter to the Sikhs in his territory and to seize and send to him all the Sikhs and their families who were there. Two

[1]The Banjaras were a set of armed men who travelled all over India before the introduction of railways and lorries. They moved in numerous bodies, each consisting of thousands of men, women and children. They carried from place to place bulky and heavy goods such as salt, wheat, rice, tin, copper and spices. In the evening they would encamp in a regular square. They placed their women and children in the centre. Their oxen were fastened with iron pegs fixed in the ground. A strong guard flanked this fortification; while their numerous dogs watched the whole encampment. A traveller of whom they took charge was perfectly safe. Neither tigers nor banditti dared approach them, so strongly organised was their camp (*Seir*, 1, 26, fn.).

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thousand cattle arrived from Sadhaura in the camp that day.

Want of money was keenly felt in Shafi's camp, as no revenues could be realized from the Sikh territory owing to the flight of inhabitants. Nor was money received from Delhi. Besides, Sikhs were inflicting considerable losses on his troops. Najaf Quli held a conference with Shafi on the 27th March and told him that the army was growing disaffected. Shafi tried his level best to satisfy him promising grant of *parganahs* and gave him a *doshala*.

Shafi's difficulties

On the 29th March two thousand Sikhs appeared at Bālchhappar in the rear of Shafi's camp (at Mustafabad). Imam-ud-din Khan Baluch of village Jui[?] visited Shafi and offered a *nazar* of five rupees.

Mirza Shafi was so much exasperated by the constant Sikh attacks on his own troops and in the Doāb, their homeland, and by the restlessness and discontent prevailing in his camp that on the 30th March he marched back to Sikandra.

Two battalions of Gangaram and Bhawani Singh, the only trained and disciplined sepoys in his army, openly revolted against the Mirza for non-payment of their dues, refused to break up their camp at Mustafabad, and stayed behind. From Sikandra Shafi sent Shuja Khan to persuade these commandants to join him offering to pay them one month's salary from the tribute of Gajpat Singh.

On the 31st March Shafi issued orders to all the zamindars of the neighbourhood to pay revenue to him. In case of non-compliance he threatened to reap their harvest and confiscate all grain and *bhoosa*.

News arrived that in Sadhaura fighting was going on between Ismail Beg and the Sikhs. Shafi detached 200 horse and foot for reinforcement.

On the 1st April the Sikhs attacked the *'amil* of Buriya, and retired before reinforcements could arrive. In the action one *Jamādar* of infantry was killed.

On the 2nd April Shafi demolished the forts of Daulat Singh and Diwan Singh, and established his own *thāna* at Sikandra. On that day the Mirza encamped on the opposite side of the Chittang stream.

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Fighting at Indri

On the 4th April Shafi from his camp on the Chittang stream despatched Mir Mansur and five other chiefs to Indri[1] (10 kms south of Ladwa). They plundered Husainpur on the way, expelled Baghel Singh's military post from Indri, and left their troops with a few pieces of camel artillery and long firelocks, and considerable quantity of grain.

On the 6th April a fierce fight took place between Mir Mansur and the Sikhs near Indri. The Sikh force leaving their horses in the neighbouring jungle fought on foot. Just then Mir Mansur was reinforced by 3,000 Afghans from Karnal and Kunjpura. When the battle was raging in full fury, battalions of Sayyid Ali and Shaikh Haidar arrived on the scene and opened artillery fire on the Sikhs from the rear. In the fight Mir Mansur and Shaikh Haidar lost their horses. The Sikhs sustained heavy losses. They left 150 men dead including Ratan Singh chief. The loss on the imperial side was thirty men killed and fifty wounded. The Sikhs fled and encamped at Radaur, 8 kms distant. Thus the military posts at Indri and Husainpur were maintained.

Another Sikh contingent attacked Shafi in the gardens of Sikandra while the *'amils* of Buriya and Sadhaura were given no rest by the Sikhs.

Najaf Khan's appreciation

Najaf Khan had failed in supplying money to Shafi and in checking the Sikh aggressions in the Doāb. But on hearing the news of victory at Indri he sent a *khilat* for Shafi consisting of a turban, *goshwara, doshala,* a gown, a waistband of shawl and a sword. A similar *khilat* was granted to Zain-ul-Abidin Khan; while a coat, a *doshala* and a *goshwara* were conferred upon Mir Mansur. Seven *doshalas* were given away to subordinate chiefs. All these articles were despatched by Shaikh Muhammad Panah with an escort of 50 horse.

The Sikh camp plundered

In the night of the 8th April Shafi and Zain-ul-Abidin Khan decided to attack the Sikh camp. When they were marching, the villagers of the neighbourhood informed the Sikhs. The Sikhs

[1]Indri was a large town with a strong citadel (Hamilton, I, 427).

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instantly broke up their camp but they were overtaken by Shafi's forces. In the action 150 Sikhs were slain and 50 were captured. Besides, 100 horses, 200 ponies, and 150 camels from the Sikh camp fell into their hands. The village Biana (7 kms. south-east of Indri and 4 kms. west of the Jamuna) was plundered and its cattle were seized by the imperial troops.

On the 9th April Zain-ul-Abidin Khan arrested the inhabitants of those villages which had given intimation to the Sikhs about Shafi's night attack. They were all blown up by a cannon. Ghulam Qadir was also ordered to devastate two or three villages that had not co-operated with the Mirza during his attack on the Sikh camp.

At Mustafabad and Kabutar Khera

On the 14th April Shafi shifted his camp from the neighbourhood of Sikandra to Mustafabad. Mirza Saidu complained to Shafi that his village was plundered by the Sikhs, and that in the neighbourhood '*amils* and villagers had become helpless against them.

On the 16th April Shafi proposed to leave his baggage train at Kunjpura to enable him to guard effectively all the *ghats* leading into the Doāb.

On the 17th April Shafi moved his camp to Kabutar Khera. He sent Mir Mansur and Sher Din Khan to establish imperial posts in the neighbourhood of Sadhaura.

News arrived that Lahna Singh, Haqiqat Singh, Jassa Singh and Gujar Singh were in correspondence with Raja Amar Singh, and intended coming to fight Shafi.

On the 18th April Khalil Khan *Jamadar* of 400 horse who had deserted Murtaza Khan then engaged in the Jaipur campaign, sought service under Shafi. He offered a *nazar* of five rupees, while his two companions presented two rupees each. The Khan received a *doshala* and a *goshwara*, his companions one *doshala* each, and his *vakil* one piece of shawl.

It was reported to the Mirza that Mir Mansur was trying to induce the Raja of Nahan to see Shafi.

Capture of Shahabad

On the 20th April Khalil Khan *Jamadar* seized Shahabad (26 kms. south of Ambala); but his troops were constantly harassed by the Sikhs.

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On the 23rd April Shafi granted a *doshala* to Jaimal *Banjara* for bringing grain into the camp.

Khalil Khan, the '*amil* of Shahabad, wrote that 200 Sikhs were hovering round Shahabad, and five *zamindars* who happened to go outside were wounded by the Sikhs. He requested Shafi to supply him a battalion and two pieces of cannon.

Advance to Sadhaura

On the 25th April Ghulam Qadir Khan lost heart for lack of funds. Shafi sent Zain-ul-Abidin Khan to conciliate Ghulam Qadir. Then he broke up his camp at Kabutar Khera and arrived near Sadhaura. The '*amil* of the place visited Shafi and offered a *nazar* of five rupees. Shafi afterwards repaired to Mir Mansur's camp. Dalel Khan, the '*amil* of Kunjpura, stated that some revenue had been collected by him and the money was at Kunjpura. It should be sent for by Sher Din Khan and Bagha Rao.

Retreat to Bilaspur

On the 26th April Sher Din Khan and Bagha Rao brought money from Kunjpura to Sadhaura. This was distributed among the troops. Shafi retreated from Sadhaura and encamped at Bilaspur (13 kms south-east).

On the 27th April Shafi received Rs. 25,000 from Gajpat Singh of Jind and all this money was given to soldiers. He settled a tribute of Rs. 17,000 on the Raja of Nahan, and Rs. 7,000 on the *zamindars* of the village Indri.

On the 29th April Shafi encamped at Bālchhappar. He was marching fast to the Jamuna with a view to plunder the Sikhs returning from the Doāb.

On the 30th April the battalion of Shaikh Haidar was disheartened for want of money; but Shafi encouraged them to stay on.

Camp at Nakum-Tabar

On the 1st May Shafi fixed his camp at Dāmla (16 kms south of Buriya and 16 kms west of the Jamuna). On the 2nd May he moved from Dāmla and encamped at Drāzpur 13 kms west of Buriya). The Sikhs continued a constant fight with him all along the way. The following day Shafi reached the bank of the Jamuna at the Ghat of Nakum-Tabar, where he fixed his permanent headquarters. On the 4th May Shafi received letters from the

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imperial officers of Sadhaura and Shahabad saying that the rumour of Najaf Quli Khan's approach was daily gaining ground. The *zamindars* of the *parganah* were rebelling and the Sikhs were creating disturbances fearlessly.

On the 5th May Shafi and Zain-ul-Abidin paid a visit to Mir Mansur in his camp, and decided to depute Zain-ul-Abidin Khan to Delhi to plead against the appointment of Najaf Quli Khan.

On the 6th May petitions from the *'amils* of Sadhaura and Shahabad arrived describing their sad plight at the hands of the Sikhs. The *'amil* of Shahabad stated that he had been defeated by the Sikhs and expelled from the town. He took shelter in a serai outside, and continued fighting with them. He appealed for aid.

Expedition to Buriya

On the 7th May Shafi got the intimation that the Sikhs had besieged Buriya. Shafi immediately marched at the head of a select force. He encamped in the mango groves outside Buriya. After meals he was entertained by dancing-girls. The *'amil* of Buriya visited Shafi and offered a *nazar* of five rupees. It was reported to him that on hearing of his approach the Sikhs instantly crossed the Jamuna into the Saharanpur district.

A letter came from the *'amil* of Shahabad saying: "The Sikhs are oppressing me very much; send reinforcement immediately." Shafi at once despatched two of Shaikh Haidar's battalions to Shahabad. It was reported that the Sikh plunderers who were halting near Thanesar had reached Shahabad. After roaming round about Buriya Shafi returned to his camp at Nakum-Tabar.

Settlement with Gajpat Singh

On the 8th May Shafi received a written agreement from Gajpat Singh to the effect that he would pay to Shafi one lakh of rupees at the time of his reaching Kunjpura and fifty thousand rupees in Karnal. He would hand over his son by way of security for two lakhs of rupees, and he himself would remain in attendance upon him. If he intrigued with the Sikhs against the Emperor his country should be laid waste. Shafi agreed to set him free. He granted him a *khilat* of six pieces with a jewelled ornament for the turban, an elephant and a horse. A *khilat* of five pieces was given to his Diwan, Nigahi Singh. Gajpat Singh's companions including Nanu Singh received four *doshalas*. Gajpat Singh was then allowed to

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leave for Kunjpura in the company of Dalel Khan of Kunjpura and of Captain Sayyid Ali and Jai Singh Rae who were at the head of two sepoy battalions. After their departure Shafi sent extra baggage including the dancing-girls across the Jamuna and himself got ready to attack the Sikhs, if they attempted to raid the Doāb.

The Sikhs attack Buriya, Sadhaura and Shahabad

On the 9th May Bhag Singh and Rae Singh who were plundering Saharanpur district returned to Buriya (5 kms west of the Jamuna). They commenced fighting with the '*amil* of the place. The Sikhs were also carrying on a running fight with the '*amil* of Sadhaura. Mir Mansur was asked to send a body of selected horse to the relief of both these places. Shafi enjoyed boating in the Jamuna. The dancing-girls who were on the other side of the river complained to Shafi of their want of money. Shafi advised them to wait at Jamalgarh.

On the 10th May, Khalil Khan's letter was received from Shahabad saying that Baghel Singh, Bhag Singh and Sher Singh were daily fighting him, and that he had taken a defensive position under the walls of the *serai* outside the town.

Jai Singh Rae reported the arrival of Gajpat Singh's son in the camp at Karnal. Shafi moved to the village Nekri(?).

On the 11th May Shafi marched to Mahanpur (5 kms south of Buriya ?). The Sikhs attacked him on the way. About 15 men on each side were wounded; while one Sikh (*chela* of Baghel Singh) was killed. Two Sikh horses were seized.

On the 12th May a letter from Jai Singh Rae was received. It stated that Gajpat Singh would be able to arrange for the payment of one lakh of rupees in twenty days' time.

The '*amil* of Shahabad informed Shafi that the Sikhs again besieged him and shot at him from the roofs of the neighbouring houses. Shafi ordered Sher Din Khan and Bagha Rao to go to his rescue; but they refused on the ground that their troops were clamouring for the arrears of their pay, that they had been going without food for the past three days, and that several of them had deserted the camp. Another report stated that the Sikhs continued the fight till the 15th May.

It was reported to the Mirza that Tara Singh Kakar, Mohar Singh, Jai Singh and Khushhal Singh Faizullahpuria had left

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Rupar for Patiala to confer with Raja Amar Singh. A message stated that these Sikhs reached Sarhind on the 15th May. This day Shafi returned to his headquarters at Nakum-Tabar.

Relief received in Shafi's camp

On the 16th May Shafi received two *hundis* for fifty thousand rupees, and ten thousand rupees in cash from Gajpat Singh. The cash was at once distributed among the troops. Finding that disaffection prevailed in Shafi's camp, Najaf Khan wrote letters to all the officers in Shafi's army stating that if anybody deserted the Mirza's camp, his estates and horses would be confiscated.

Khalil Khan's sad plight

On the 17th May Khalil Khan's petition full of piteous appeals arrived in the camp. Shafi asked everyone of his officers to go to his rescue; but so great was the discontent prevailing among the troops that none agreed. The Mirza in sheer disappointment appealed to his brother Zain-ul-Abidin Khan who had postponed his departure for Delhi. He also declined saying: "The destruction of my troops will ruin the entire army. I am therefore not prepared to go to Shahabad. Possibly more Sikhs may arrive there and besiege us. It will spoil the whole affair." Shafi replied: "If this is God's will, I am helpless; but I cannot show my face to the Nawab (Najaf Khan), and will retire to some other quarter."

Najaf Khan's instructions

Shafi wrote to Najaf Khan that if he would send for Gajpat Singh to Delhi and would demand his revenues from the Mirza, he would desert his post and would proceed to the capital. Najaf replied that he would not require Gajpat Singh's money from him; but Gajpat Singh must attend the court, otherwise the imperial prestige would suffer. He instructed Shafi to march to Shahabad. Murtaza Khan was ordered to join him. A sepoy battalion was appointed at Raj Ghat on the Jamuna to punish the deserters from Shafi's camp. Najaf Khan granted a *khilat* of five pieces—*doshala*, *goshwara*, waistband, gown and turban – and a horse to Murad Beg, and one *doshala* to Khusro Beg, and sent them to join Shafi's camp.

Shahabad recaptured by the Sikhs

On the 18th May a messenger reported that Karam Singh and

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Baghel Singh were fighting with the *'amil* of Shahabad and that they had created a breach in the wall of the *serai*. Gangaram, the commandant of a sepoy battalion who had been sent to reinforce Khalil Khan disobeyed the *'amil*. Khalil Khan confined him; but later he was released.

Sher Singh of Buriya was besieging Sadhaura; while Rae Singh and Bhag Singh were lying encamped at Amin (7 kms south of Thanesar). The Sikhs from Rupar were still encamped at Sarhind.

On the 21st May a petition from the *'amil* of Shahabad came stating: "The Sikhs have pushed nearer. The town is also in their control. If reinforcements arrive my life can be saved; otherwise there seems to be no way of escape." Shafi prepared to march himself; but he was dissuaded by Mir Mansur: "You are fully aware what fighting with the Sikhs means. Without a strong army further march is absolutely inadvisable. God knows what may happen there."

On the 22nd May news arrived that Khalil Khan sought for peace through Karam Singh and offered a horse by way of *nazar*. The Sikhs demanded evacuation of the *serai*. Khalil obeyed and came out with 300 horse, 800 foot and 2 pieces of cannon. His troops were immediately attacked and plundered; while Khalil was shot dead.

This day Murad Beg and Khusro Beg joined Shafi. The former offered two rupees and the latter five rupees as *nazar*. Shafi wrote an urgent letter to Jai Singh Rae to bring Gajpat Singh immediately in his camp.

Najaf Khan's helplessness

The fall of Shahabad greatly disheartened Shafi, and he made a pathetic appeal to Delhi for reinforcement. On the receipt of Shafi's letter on the 25th May Najaf Khan remarked: "Mirza Shafi Khan's case has grown bad; because his Mughal army does not obey him, and the difficulty of money is the greatest." Najaf Khan sent Mustafa to visit every commandant's house and to find out whose troopers had deserted Shafi's camp.

On the 26th May Najaf Khan ordered Badal Beg Khan to join Shafi with his sons and horse contingent. Badal Beg sent a reply that in proportion to his estate his troopers were already there. Mustafa, the proclaimer, was sent to various officers with orders to send the deserters back to Shafi's camp. Some of Murad Beg's

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troopers had also deserted and they were asked to join Shafi at once.

Fall of Sadhaura and other places

On the 28th May Shafi despatched Sayyid Ali, Gangaram, Ghulam Muhammad and Sher Din Khan Mandal with a battalion each to assist the *'amil* of Sadhaura.

Faizullah, son of Qasim Khan, who had gone from Shafi's camp to Delhi saw Najaf Khan and offered a *nazar* of five rupees. He was granted a *khilat*, *doshala*, *goshwara*, and gown. Qasim Khan was instructed to send back all the deserters to Shafi's camp.

On the 29th May Shafi wrote to Najaf Khan: "The soldiers are demanding their salary; and they insist on going to Delhi with Gajpat Singh."

The battalions marching to Sadhaura reached Damla. On the 30th May they proceeded farther fighting with the Sikhs the whole day. By nightfall they arrived in thenei ghbourhood of Sadhaura where they were joined by the *'amil* of the place. In the fight on the way the imperial troops lost 7 men in killed and 150 wounded. The Sikhs lost 10 troopers with their horses in killed. The commandants decided to retire taking the *'amil* with them to Shafi's camp in case the Sikhs appeared there in greater strength.

Early in the morning of the 31st May they decided to evacuate Sadhaura. They raised the military post there, and also at Bilaspur and Mustafabad on the way, and joined Shafi in the evening. The Sikhs were constantly in pursuit of the fugitives. In the whole day's fight the Sikhs lost 80 men and the imperial forces 40 men in killed and wounded. The Sikhs then marched to Buriya to expel Shafi's officer.

Gajpat Singh sent to Delhi

On the 1st June Shafi wanted to send Gajpat Singh to Delhi; but hesitated to do so for fear of the Sikhs.

Two thousand Sikhs appeared at Buriya to invest it; but the heavy artillery fire from the fort drove them away.

On the 2nd June Shafi sent Gajpat Singh to Delhi accompanied by the battalions of Kajjar and Murad Beg. A body of 2,000 Sikhs marched to Kunjpura and another batch of 5,000 Sikhs besieged Damla. Ghulam Qadir Khan was indisposed, and left for Ghausgarh.

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Assault on Shafi's camp

Rae Singh, Bhag Singh and Baghel Singh at the head of 3,000 soldiers encamped at Damla; while other Sikhs halted at a distance of about 9 kms. Five hundred Sikhs suddenly appeared before Shafi's camp at Nakum-Tabar; but shortly afterwards they retired having wounded two or three soldiers. On the 4th June frequent skirmishes took place between Shafi and the Sikhs.

Gajpat Singh's arrival at Delhi

On the 4th June Gajpat Singh, Nigahi Singh and Diwan Singh were presented to Najaf Khan by Mahdi Quli Khan. Each of them offered a *nazar* of 5 gold coins, 2 gold coins, and five rupees respectively. Gajpat Singh was granted a *khilat* of five pieces, Nigahi Singh of three pieces, and Diwan Singh three *doshalas* and two pieces of shawl.

On the 5th June Dilaram, *vakil* of Shafi and Zain-ul-Abidin Khan urged Najaf Khan to write letters to all the captains in Shafi's camp to exert themselves fully in fighting the Sikhs. The Wazir promised to comply with his wishes, and also to send money from Gajpat Singh's revenues.

On the 6th June as a result of Murad Beg's application Gajpat Singh was put up with Mahdi Quli Khan, while Sher Din Khan Mandal and Kajjar stayed in their camps.

On the 8th June Dilaram produced Shafi's petition before Najaf Khan, urging upon the Wazir to send him money immediately, as the troops were getting rebellious.

Negotiations between Shafi and the Sikhs fail

On the 9th June Surjan Khan Mandal marched towards Damla. A skirmish with the Sikhs took place on the way. He cut off the head of one Sikh, wounded three or four and seized two horses; while three or four of his own troopers were wounded. Zain-ul-Abidin was disappointed for having received no money from Delhi, and was going to desert the camp; but he was persuaded by Mir Mansur to stay.

It was reported that the Sikhs wanted to cross the Jamuna into the Doāb. Shafi resolved to pursue them. He wanted to leave the country to the west of the Jamuna to the care of Gajpat Singh, and himself wished to encamp for the approaching rainy season in the Doāb. Najaf Khan ordered Shafi "not at all to cross the Jamuna."

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On the 12th June Shafi sent Jai Singh Rae to Diwan Singh, Baghel Singh and Gurdit Singh to settle terms of peace. He offered them Radaur, Babain and Shamgarh in return for the booty of Shahabad; but the Sikhs did not agree.

Terms offered to Gajpa: Singh

The same day Ram Ratan Modi submitted a report to Najaf Khan regarding Gajpat Singh's revenues. The total revenue amounted to six lakhs of rupees. Out of this two lakhs and forty thousand had been paid to Shafi. Two lakhs and ten thousand were promised in eight days. The remaining one lakh and fifty thousand were to be paid in two months in three instalments. Until the full payment hostages were to be given by Gajpat Singh.

On the 13th June it was reported to Najaf Khan that Gajpat Singh's deputy was arranging for money and wished that Gajpat Singh should be given leave soon. Najaf Khan insisted on immediate payment.

Shafi encamps at Kunjpura

On the 16th June Dalel Khan of Kunjpura advised Shafi to encamp for the rainy season near Buriya, as the Sikhs were daily attacking that place.

On the 19th June the Sikh chiefs offered their terms for peace, but they were rejected by Shafi.

On the 22nd June Shafi was ordered by Najaf Khan to pitch his camp at Radaur (20 kms north of Indri) for the rainy season, but the Mirza stuck fast to his post on the ghat of Nakum-Tabar on the Jamuna (13 kms south-east of Radaur). Some time later he fell back on his base at Kunjpura (33 kms further south).

Here the MS ends.

A Marathi letter dated 10th June, 1781, says: "From Delhi Najaf Khan has sent his assistant Ambar Shah (Mirza Shafi) with 40,000 troops and artillery against the Sikhs. He went to Sarhind district and confronted the Sikhs. The Sikhs defeated the imperial army slew ten to fifteen thousand soldiers and seized all their guns. The imperial army fled back to Panipat."[1]

Causes of Shafi's failure

Shafi's campaign failed in spite of disunion among the Sikhs.

[1]Maheshwar, I, 53.

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The chief factor responsible for this failure was the bankruptcy of Najaf Khan who could supply the Mirza neither reinforcement nor money not even balls and bullets to replenish his exhausted stores of munition. His insolvency disappointed not only his captains of war but also the Emperor and the royal harem.

"The Emperor called him a hardened liar, a man of deceit, and in the bitterness of his soul cried out, 'Abdul Ahad was a hundred thousand times better than you. I have no faith in you, nor ever had.' The ladies of the imperial harem, equally exasperated by the withholding of their allowances, vowed to link their arms together and drown themselves in the Jamuna rather than constantly whine for their subsistence money and yet not get it for months together, while their credit with the shopkeepers was exhausted. They even went into a hunger-strike for some days. To the emissaries who came to offer Najaf Khan's excuses for his default of payment, 'His Majesty said things which were not fit to be spoken.' One day, driven to extremity, by his distress, he told his slave Qambar, 'If you eat any meal today, it will be drinking swine's blood. Go to Najaf Khan's house and sit down before him (in *dharna*). Don't eat anything, but prevent him too from eating, till the allowance of the harem is realized in full.' Another day he told Maulvi Ataullah: 'My condition has come to this that I have no second coat in my wardrobe.' Then, before his sons and nephews he wrote the verses:

Jahān rā Jahāndār dārad kharāb, Za dast-e-Najaf Khan wa Afrāsiyāb.

"The master of the world is ruining the world, through Najaf Khan and Afrasiyab."[1]

Many of his lieutenants were assigned lands in the Ganga Doāb in lieu of their salaries. Owing to the Sikh invasion of this territory no revenues could be collected to feed their troopers, who as a result grew rebellious. In order to stop the Sikh raids in these regions it was essential to secure the co-operation of Zabita Khan who possessed vast estates, and whose influence was considered sufficient to pacify the Sikhs. Najaf Khan therefore did his best to induce Zabita Khan to go and assist Shafi. But Shafi and Zabita Khan could not work in one yoke on account of their youthful and haughty temperament and differences of race and religion;

[1]Sarkar, III, 199-200.

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one an Irani and Shia, and the other a Rohilla Afghan and Sunni. Zabita also demanded money to pay his troops; but Najaf had nothing to give except fair promises. Besides, Zabita was not prepared to crush his willing and sole allies, the Sikhs.

Shafi continues his camp at Kunjpura

Shafi continued his camp at Kunjpura until mid-summer of 1782. He stuck fast to his post even after the death of his patron, Najaf Khan, on the 6th April, 1782. The Emperor with a view to keep the warden of marches pleased sent to him a robe of honour, consisting of a turban, a half-sleeved vest, a sword, and a shield on the 14th April, 1782. He was called to Delhi by the sister of Najaf Khan on the 12th June, 1782.[1]

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[1]British Museum, *Persian Akhbarat*, Or. 25,020, I, folios 51b, 53b, 54a, 56, 57b, 59a-b, 60b, 62a-b, 63b, 64a, 65b, 67a-b, 69b, 71b, 72a, 73b, 74b, 76b, 77b, 80b, 85b, 86a-b, 90a, 91b, 93b, 94b, 96b, 97a, 99b, 103b, 104a, 105b, 108a-b, 109b, 113a-b, 117b, 121a-b, 122a, 123a, 125a-b, 128a, 130b, 132b, 133a-b, 137a-b, 140b, 144b, 146a, 150a, 154b, 155a, 160b, 161a, 163a, 165a, 168b, 171a-b, 175-a, 177a, 178b, 179a, 182b, 183b, 185b, 187b, 189a, 193b, 199b, 204b, 205a, 206a, 210b, 215a, 220a-b, 223b, 224b, 225a, 226a, 228b, 229a-b, 230b, 232b. 233a-b, 236b, 237a-b, 241b, 242b, 243a, 247a, 250a-b, 254a-b, 255a-b; 257a-b, 258a, 264b. 265a-b, 266a-b, 267a, 270a-b, 273b, 274a, 275b, 280b, 281a-b, 282b, 283b, 284a-b, 285a-b, 287b, 288a, 290b, 292a-b, 293a-b, 298b, 303a-b, 304a-b, 305a, 307b, 308a-b, 311b, 312b, 314b, 316b, 319a-b, 320a-b, 324b, 325a, 327b, 328a-b, 332b, 333b, 334a, 335b, 336a, 337b, 338a, 339a-b, 340a, 341b, 342a, 343b, 344a, 345a-b.

cf. *N.A.I., Secret Proceedings*, 3rd March, 1783, pp. 761-62; *Munna Lal*, 241-45; *Rajwade*, XII, 19; *Maheshwar*, I, 45; *Dilliyethil*, I, 23.

A news-letter of Delhi dated 18th August, 1781, recorded that a terrible earthquake took place in the Punjab in which thousands of persons perished and a large number of houses were levelled to the ground. It was most severe in the district of Hazara where deep cavities occurred in the earth. Its effects were felt up to Lahore and Multan. Or. 25,021; folios 204b-5a.

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CHAPTER 10

Sovereignty and Rakhi Conceded to the Sikhs

The Sikh retribution

Mirza Shafi entered the Sikh territory in the Ambala district on the 25th February, 1781, with a view to extirpate the Sikh principalities. The Sikh chiefs were completely disunited at this time. In case of their unity nobody would have dared to look at them with a view of aggression. But this was impossible. Even those Sikhs who were directly and immediately affected were not going to act in concert. Nor were they going to yield. Each decided to act independently, not to expel him as this was out of the question, but to harass him. Shafi's troops were mostly recruited from the upper Ganga Doāb. The Sikhs therefore resolved to adopt two measures--guerilla warfare and devastation of the Doāb. To begin with one thousand Sikhs cut into the rear of Shafi, and crossed the Jamuna on the same day (25th February). They drove away 2,000 cattle from the town of Kot. Shafi sent two battalions with two pieces of cannon in pursuit of them. On the 27th February some more Sikhs crossed into the Doāb, and carried off cattle from Lakhnauti (11 kms from Kunjpura), and marched to Bidauli (22 kms south). After these preludes they spent a month in concentrating on fighting against Shafi, with a view to quiet down the apprehensions of the Delhi Government regarding their rapine in the Doāb.

About the end of March they resumed their freebooting activities. On the 29th March two hundred troops of Gurdit Singh of Ladwa raided the Doāb and carried away cattle from Garhi Bhai Khan (also known as Garhi Duhtar, 38 kms north-west of Muzaffarnagar). On the 2nd April Gurdit Singh plundered a village near Meerut. They slew and wounded a few persons.

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Kajjar's Battalion despatched from Delhi

The Sikhs were not to be disappointed in the success of their tactics. Shafi was greatly puzzled, and he made urgent appeals to Najaf Khan to drive the Sikhs back from the Doāb in order to check restlessness daily growing among his troops. The Wazir despatched on the 2nd April one infantry battalion and 400 horse under Kajjar *Farangi* and Qalandar Singh. They were instructed to join Shafi if he required their assistance.

With a view to strengthen Kajjar, Najaf Khan on the 7th April ordered Mirza Jafar to proceed to Saharanpur with 3,000 horse and foot and two pieces of cannon. Jafar showed unwillingness to serve under Shafi owing to personal differences, and Najaf did not press the matter further.

Najaf Khan consulted Opat astronomer regarding Shafi's expedition. Opat told him that the Sikhs would fight Shafi on the 16th, 22nd, 24th April and the 4th May; and that ultimately the imperial forces would be victorious.

The attack on Shamli parganah

On the 8th April another batch of the Sikhs crossed the Jamuna, and plundered Gangoh (8 kms east of the river) and several other villages. They halted 8 kms west of Shamli (11 kms east of the Jamuna opposite Panipat). The inhabitants of the *parganah* were on the alert. Two men were killed in fighting. The Sikhs then returned, and on their way plundered a village and drove away cattle. Kajjar was at Kandhla (13 kms south of Shamli), but he could not summon up courage to face the Sikhs.[1]

On the 10th April the Sikhs proceeded to Shamli. The *chaudhri* of the place bought them off by offering money for *karah prashad* (consecrated food). Another contingent of the Sikhs pillaged Husainpur (23 kms south-east of Budhana), and encamped near Budhana (24 kms south-east of Shamli). In this town twelve houses of Afghans were plundered by them, but the rest of the town was spared for a tribute of Rs 4,000.

Shafi and Zain-ul-Abidin Khan wrote letters to Najaf Khan bitterly complaining against the ravages of the Sikhs in the Ganga

[1]Shamli was a prosperous town, 3½ kms in circumference, with beautiful buildings, a large *bazar*, and the remains of a mint. Its streets intersected one another at right angles, each having a separate gate at its entrance, and all the gates were closed at night (Hamilton, I, 425).

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Doāb, which caused great discontent among his troops. Najaf Khan issued orders to Afrasiyab Khan to march from Aligarh to Ghausgarh and expel the Sikhs.

Near Delhi and Meerut

On the 12th April the Sikhs advanced farther south and sacked Baghpat (32 kms north of Delhi). Then they laid waste Khekra (21 kms north of Delhi). The Sikhs intercepted letters from Najaf Khan to Shafi. Hence there was alarm in the capital. Najaf Khan ordered Ram Ratan to prepare balls that could fit in big guns. Shafi supplicated Najaf Khan to expel the Sikhs from the Doāb.

On the 13th April Ghulam Qadir Khan detached 500 horse from his battalion and sent them to the Doāb to protect his territories. Shafi again urged Najaf Khan to take quick steps towards the Sikh expulsion. Najaf Khan summoned Najaf Quli Khan to undertake an expedition against the Sikhs in the Doāb. He offered Najaf Quli cash amounting to Rs. 50,009. Najaf Quli insisted on the grant of a *jagir* worth one lakh of rupees.

The Sikhs attacked Sardhana (20 kms north of Meerut) the estate of Begam Samru, granted to her late husband in 1778. Afterwards they stormed Mawana (32 kms east of Sardhana), and compelled the *'aml* to pay tribute. They marched as far south as Muradnagar (32 kms south-west of Meerut) and pillaged the place. Mannu Lal, the *vakil* of Begam Samru, sought assistance from Najaf Khan. The Wazir issued urgent orders to Afrasiyab Khan to take immediate action against the invader; but none of his lieutenants would march unless they were paid two months' salary in advance. The Wazir had no funds to give any money.

On the 16th April the Sikhs attacked Shahdara and Patparganj, the suburbs of Delhi; and the residents of these places fled away. Begam Samru sent troops and guns to protect her villages. The people as far as Rewari (80 kms south-west of Delhi) were terrified.

Another batch of Sikhs assaulted Shaikhpura Barnawa (32 kms north-west of Meerut). The *āmil* of the place opposed them. He was wounded and took to flight. The Sikhs pillaged and destroyed the village by fire. They established their own military post there. Afterwards they attacked Bamnauli (8 kms north-west), and charged Rs. 400 and a horse by way of *rākḥi*. Three villages in the

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neighbourhood were laid waste by the Sikhs. The Gosains of Rampur, 8 kms distant from Shaikhpura, resisted the Sikhs who in a body of 2,500 invested the village.

On the 17th April Najaf Khan prevailed upon Niaz Ali Beg with a battalion of Najib soldiers to march to Kairana (5 kms east of the Jamuna opposite Panipat) to protect his estate. Four hundred horse under Mahbub Ali Khan accompanied him. A battalion of archers of Muhammad Beg Hamdani was ordered to be ready for fighting the Sikhs. Dhiraj, the '*amil* of Shahdara, asked for troops for the defence of the place. He was provided with 200 infantry.

On the 18th April, Mian Kallu, on behalf of the Emperor, represented to Najaf Khan that the people of Shahdara were restless, and something must be done for them.[1]

A letter from Kajjar stated that he advanced from Kandhla to Kairana (10 kms north-west); but the *zamindars* of the locality were in collusion with the Sikhs, and daily fighting was going on. Najaf Khan ordered Note to march to the Doāb with his battalion. Instructions were issued to Qasim Khan and Lalazar Beg to be ready to follow Note. Bishan Nath reported that Afrasiyab Khan had marched from Dashna to Kalavati. Two more cavalry regiments were ordered to purchase the Sikhs in the Doāb.

That day the Sikhs laid siege to Jasar Kot. The inhabitants of the village came out to fight. In the engagement the Sikhs lost forty to fifty men. They fled and were pursued by the villagers for a couple of kms. Unluckily the powder-magazine in the village caught fire and destroyed the whole village. The people rode out on horseback to seek shelter, but the Sikhs attacked and killed them, and plundered their property. A body of 500 Sikhs carried off cattle from the village Dhakauli (38 kms north-west of Meerut). The rest of them attacked Meerut. They retired from there in the afternoon, and halted 16 kms to the west. Being laden with booty they contemplated crossing the Jamuna to their homes.

On the 19th April the Sikhs lay encamped on the eastern side of the river Kali in the neighbourhood of Sardhana, dominating the territory between Meerut and Budhana (a distance of 40 kms). They plundered a chariot (*rath*) and eight horsemen proceeding from Shikarpur. They gathered information regarding the fords on the Jamuna, and were informed that Shafi's men were guarding the

[1]This day Ataullah, the vakil of the Raja of Jammu, reported to Najaf Khan that Raja Ranjit Dev had died a natural death. (*Akhbarat*, 160b.)

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Ghat of Chhaprauli (between Sonepat and Panipat). So they decided to cross the river in the *parganah* of Ganaur (probably at Ghat Kutana, 13 kms south of Chhaprauli).

That day it was reported that the gun-factory at Delhi caught fire and caused destruction of fourteen guns, one carriage, one gun-smith and a boy.[1]

The Emperor sent by his servant Kallu a basket of flowers to Najaf Khan, and requested the Wazir to check the Sikhs and to pay salary to the servants of the palace.[2]

With an hour of daylight Najaf Khan went out on an elephant for an evening ride, and rode to and fro in the dry bed of the river.[3]

Najaf Khan inspected the troops of Murtaza Khan and Ghazi Khan, encamped on the bank of the Jamuna opposite Delhi. Ghazi Khan had 2,500 horse and foot, and Murtaza Khan 600 horse and 1,000 foot, all ready to march against the Sikhs.

On the 20th April, a body of 400 Sikhs crossed the Jamuna into their own territory to deposit the booty in their homes. They reached as far as Dhin and Manglaur (32 kms west of the Jamuna). Here they started selling their plundered property. It was reported that 1,000 Sikhs were advancing towards Hardwar.

On the 24th April another body of 500 Sikhs crossed the Jamuna. Three hundred of them were laden with booty. Mir Mansur attacked them. A sharp engagement ensued in which the Mir was shot in the left arm, and his horse was wounded. Mir Baqar, his nephew Mir Kallan, Inayat Ali and several other *Jamadars* were killed; and in all about twenty persons were slain and wounded. The Sikhs carried off fifteen horses. Four Sikh heads were brought into the camp.

The Sikhs in the company of Gujars seem to have attempted to cross the Ganga into Rohilkhand, as it will be clear from the following letter of Nawab Faizullah Khan received by the Governor of Bengal on the 9th May, 1781: "The foremost object of his heart has always been to fulfil the wishes of the English and consequently at their request he stationed his cavalry for the last two years at Daranagar where it is engaged in one or two skirmishes

[1] *Akhbarat*, 153b.
[2] ibid.
[3] ibid.

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every month with the Sikhs and the Gujars on the bank of the Ganga."[1]

Zabita Khan blamed

At the failure of his efforts in checking the Sikhs in the Doāb Najaf Khan blamed Zabita Khan. He said that Zabita Khan always maintained correspondence with the Sikhs. They devastated the Doāb at his instigation, and he never opposed them with a serious mind. It was proper to seize his estates and to establish imperial military posts at Ghausgarh and Thana Bhawan. Najaf Quli should be given charge of this territory, while a cash subsidy should be fixed for Zabita Khan.

Murtaza Khan's advance

On the 27th April Murtaza Khan marched from Khekra to Bamnauli on the bank of the river Krishni (25 kms west of Sardhana). The Sikhs lay encamped at Khatauli (32 kms north of Meerut). He proposed to attack the Sikhs *via* Barnawa (8 kms south-east of Bamnauli). But his troops were suffering from want of money. Najaf Khan promised to remit money as soon as possible, and instructed him to punish the Sikhs.

Sahib Singh's protests

On the 29th April Sahib Singh, the *vakil* of Zabita Khan, submitted that Najaf Khan must investigate into the allegations made against his master. He added that if Najaf Quli Khan was prepared to undertake full responsibility of all affairs, he might be given charge of the Rohilla estates. Najaf Khan asked Sahib Singh to advise his master to join Najaf Quli Khan in repelling the Sikhs from the Doāb.

The same day Sahib Singh reported that the Sikhs had marched from Khatauli and lay encamped at Thana Bhawan. They were laden with booty, and intended to cross the Jamuna for their homes.

On the 30th April Sahib Singh represented that his master was not prepared to fight under Najaf Quli Khan; and Najaf Khan, if he so desired, could take away estates from Zabita Khan. Najaf Khan replied that Najaf Quli would go only to punish the Sikhs.

[1]*C.P.C.*, VI, 145, 149, 194.

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Najaf Khan then sent for Najaf Quli Khan and said to him: "Send Jalal Khan as your representative to Zabita Khan with the message that without his assistance you would not succeed in repelling the Sikhs, and that you depend upon him."

Shafi's opposition

Shafi was also opposed to the appointment of Najaf Quli Khan in the Saharanpur district. He informed Najaf Khan that he was not prepared to work in collaboration with him. On the 29th April Dilaram, *vakil* of Shafi and Zain-ul-Abidin Khan, represented that his masters were conquering the country that was given as a *jagir* to Najaf Quli Khan. This was sheer injustice. Najaf Khan replied that Najaf Quli Khan would go there only to set matters right in that quarter.

On the 30th April petitions were received from Shafi and Zain-ul-Abidin complaining that Najaf Quli Khan and Zabita Khan were directly negotiating with Raja Amar Singh and other Sikh chiefs, and this weakened their position. If matters grew worse they should not be blamed. Najaf Khan remarked: "Owing to their childish intelligence they understand nothing."

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The siege of Kakripur

On the 30th April Murtaza Khan encamped at Kandhla. He interviewed all the local chiefs, big and small, asking for their co-operation in the expulsion of the Sikhs. The Sikhs were encamped at the village Bharadas(?) which was near the river about 40 kms distant. Sixteen troopers of Bagha Rao were coming to join Murtaza Khan. Fearing the Sikhs they hid themselves in the village Kakripur. The Sikhs invested the village and compelled the inhabitants to deliver the Marathas to them. They seized their horses, and left the Marathas wounded. Five hundred Sikhs along with the cattle they had lifted crossed the Jamuna at *Ghat* Konda (Kutana?), and went to their homes. The news from Ghausgarh stated that another body of Sikhs carrying booty was crossing the Jamuna by the *Ghat* of Mansurpur near Lakhnauti. A later message from Murtaza Khan's camp declared the arrival of the commander near Shamli. Several scattered bodies of the Sikhs were committing depredations in all directions. The Sikhs attacked his camp, and when he rode out to fight with them, they hastily retired.

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Instructions for Zabita Khan

On the 30th April Najaf Khan granted private audience to Sahib Singh, the *vakil* of Zabita Khan. He asked him to urge his master to go with Najaf Quli to conclude peace with the Sikhs as quickly as possible, and to engage 5,000 Sikhs to serve under Najaf Khan. Zabita Khan was made plenipotentiary mediator in this affair. To show that he was doing a favour to Zabita Khan, he remarked to the *vakil*: "He has not fought with the Sikhs even once during a a fortnight. His boast has been exposed."

Kajjar fights with the Sikhs

On the 30th April a pair of messengers arrived from *parganah* Kairana stating that an action took place between Kajjar and the Sikhs. Kajjar lost two *hawaldars* and ten soldiers. The artillery fire put the Sikhs to flight. The Sikhs then besieged Garhi Abdullah Khan.

Ataullah submitted that Murtaza Khan plundered two villages including Rajpur and drove away cattle. Najaf Khan wrote to Murtaza Khan that it was not well on his part to do so.

On the 6th May Murtaza Khan intended to see Shafi who directed him not to cross the Jamuna from the Karnal and Kunjpura side. Murtaza Khan left Kairana and encamped at Bidauli (21 kms north on the Jamuna).

Zabita Khan urged to assist

On the 7th May when Shafi invaded Buriya, a body of the Sikhs under Rae Singh and Bhag Singh crossed over into the Saharanpur district. The alarming news of the Sikh activities again compelled Najaf Khan to urge upon Sahib Singh the necessity of co-operation by Zabita Khan with Najaf Quli Khan: "I thought," said the Wazir, "Zabita Khan was possessed of wisdom; but he spoils the business in that quarter. Tell him that even now he should join Najaf Quli Khan."

Gopal Rao sent to Meerut

Nothing is known about the events that took place later in May; but it is certain that Najaf Quli remained in Delhi. On the 3rd June Gopal Rao Maratha was appointed to restore order in the *parganahs* of Meerut, and he was given 500 horse, five battalions of infantry and two pieces of cannon. He was granted a *doshala* and

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a *goshwara* at the time of departure.

On the 18th June some Sikh horsemen crossed the Jamuna into the Doāb; while 500 Sikhs wandered in the neighbourhood of Sikandra.

The Sikh invasion of the Ganga Doāb was the chief cause of Shafi's failure; and Najaf Khan possessed no adequate means to check their aggression. Besides, he not only disheartened his lieutenants but sorely disappointed the Emperor, owing to his failure to raise any revenue from these lands. This compelled him to make peace with the Sikhs generally on their own terms.

The sovereignty and the right of Rākhi conceded to the Sikhs

On the 27th June, 1781, Zabita Khan was given congee to settle terms with the Sikhs. He went to Ghausgarh. On the 12th July Najaf Khan fixed Gajpat Singh's tribute at six lakhs, out of which he realized three lakhs and kept his son as a hostage for the payment of the balance. He granted him robes of honour, a jewelled ornament for the turban, a sword, a necklace of pearls, a frilled palankeen, a horse and an elephant, and conferred upon him the title of Maharaja. Gajpat Singh's son, his *Diwan* and other companions were also given *khilats*. Najaf's parting words to him were: "Let the Sikh lands remain with the Sikhs. You and they should now come and join our army."[1]

Zabita Khan and Gajpat Singh interviewed the Sikh chiefs and persuaded them to come to an agreement with the Delhi Government. "The terms of this pact were that the Sikhs would not raid the imperial territory any more, but serve in the Delhi army for pay when called upon, in return for their being now formally confirmed in the possession of their estates, roughly the region north of Panipat, and granted the right of levying blackmail (called *rākhi* about two annas for every rupee of the standard land revenue due to the State) in the region from Panipat to the walls of Delhi and in the upper Doāb. Najaf Khan only repeated what the Sayyid brothers had done 62 years earlier in respect of the Maratha claim to blackmail in Mughal Deccan."

Thus the Mughal Emperor of India formally accepted the soverei-

[1]*Delhi Chronicle*, 334; *Dilliyethil*, 1, 28, 35; Rajwade, XII, 19; Maheshwar, 1, 47, 48, 50, 55; Sarkar, III, 219. The Marathi records place the grant of title to Gajpat Singh on July 7, 1781.

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gnty of the Sikhs over the country situated to the west of the Jamuna, and admitted their right of blackmail in the Upper Ganga Doāb. In this manner their sway became de jure as well as de facto. This recognition by the highest authority in the realm was a very remarkable achievement of the Sikhs. If they had not been the unfortunate victim of disunity, dissonance and dissension, there was every likelihood that the Sikhs would have superseded the Marathas in supremacy over Northern India.[1]

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[1]British Museum, *Persian Akhbarat*, Or. 25,020 I, folios 99b, 113a, 114b, 117a, 122a, 125b, 126a, 129b, 130a, 132b, 133a-b, 137a-b, 140a-b, 141a-b, 142b, 143a-b, 144a-b, 145b, 147a, 148a-b, 149a, 152a, 153a-b, 154a, 159a-b, 160a, 169a, 178a-b, 179b, 180a, 182a, 183a-b, 184b, 186a-b, 187a, 193a-b, 199b, 200b, 205a-b, 209b, 210a, 215a, 219b, 220a, 221a-b, 225b, 229a-b, 233a-b, 236b, 237b, 244b, 316a, 343b, Sarkar, III, 219.

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CHAPTER 11

The Sikh Supremacy in the Doab and Delhi, 1781-83

Resumption of ravages by the Sikhs

The peace between the Sikhs and the Delhi Government lasted for a short time. Each side was suspicious of the other. Najaf Khan had stationed Shafi at Kunjpura to keep a watch over the Sikhs. The Sikhs disliked this distrust, and were not prepared to tolerate Shafi's camp at the head of their territories. They abided by the terms of the pact for about eight months, and finding that Shafi's post had not been abolished they decided to attack the crownlands.

They hesitated to take direct action themselves and invited Jai Singh Kanhiya from across the Satluj to advance towards the imperial territory. The situation in Delhi was at this time favourable to the Sikhs. Najaf Khan was ill, and serious dissensions prevailed among his chiefs.

On the 28th March, 1782, Najaf Khan ordered Shafi to advance against the Sikhs with 10,000 troops. This was the last great act of the dying Wazir who passed away about a week later on the 6th April, 1782.

Najaf Khan was the last man in the Mughal aristocracy who had succedeed to some extent in putting a little energy into the decaying body of the Mughal Empire. He was "resolute in adversity, merciful in success, and his memory is free from the stains of cruelty and falsehood which tarnish almost every name of the period." "No one ever left the Mirza's presence," says Keene, "dissatisfied; if he could grant a request he would; if not he would never fail to convince the applicant of his sorrow at being obliged to refuse."[1]

Shafi maintained the struggle with the Sikhs for nearly two

[1] *Hindustan under free Lances*, 396.

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months, and early in June when he had received summons from Delhi to be present at the court he made peace with the Sikhs. As the rainy season was approaching, Jai Singh Kanhiya along with other Sardars retired to Patiala. There he opened negotiations with Mahadji Sindhia through his agent Maheshwar Das in order to unite the Sikhs and the Marathas to end the Emperor's rule.

After Najaf Khan the struggle for power began among his four lieutenants. Afrasiyab Khan and Najaf Quli Khan were his two slaves. Mirza Muhammad Shafi Khan was his grand nephew. Muhammad Beg Hamdani was the leader of the Mughalia troops. From April 1782 to November 1784 when Mahadji Sindhia became Dictator of Delhi, a period of two years and a half witnessed the blood-stained conflict among these four claimants to power.

Afrasiyab Khan was a Hindu shopkeeper's orphan child. He was converted to Islam and nominated on his death-bed his successor. But nobody liked him because of his being a slave and a Hindu by birth. Najaf Quli Khan was an Irani, indolent and pleasure-loving. Shafi descended from the royal family of Iran. Being a good-natured youth of frank manners he had no chance of success in an age of cunning, craftiness and crime. Muhammad Beg Hamdani was an Afghan, ferocious, treacherous and an excellent soldier.

Afrasiyab Khan succeeded his master. In five months he was overthrown by Shafi. After a month Shafi was also ousted from office. Afrasiyab regained power. One month later Shafi succeeded again. In January, 1783 Shafi went on a campaign against Agra. Afrasiyab and Hamdani joined hands in opposition to Shafi.[1]

So in the first quarter of 1783 Delhi had become a cockpit of tussle. The Maratha agent Hingane reported: "Everyone wishes to make himself dominant, and great disturbance prevails."

Sir Jadunath observes: "With huge rival armies scowling and growling at each other in the same city" which was "without any magistrate or police guard" awful disturbances prevailed in the capital and no one took the trouble of checking the Sikh aggression.[2]

[1] *Dilliyethil*, 1,84; Sarkar, III, 167 (1964 edition).
[2] ibid, 168.

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Lawless activities of the Sikhs

No sooner was the rainy season over than the Sikhs resumed in September their lawless activities, and they roved and looted people from Delhi to Hardwar. They audaciously plundered the environs of Delhi up to Sabzi Mandi and Patparganj, and laid waste the country as far south as Khurja. Only the walled villages remained safe, the rest of the people having fled to *Gangapar*.[1]

Some of the Sikhs who were roving in the Doāb were won over by Zabita Khan and taken to the Pathargarh fort in Rohilkhand. Nawab Asaf-ud-daulah of Oudh was so much frightened of having the Sikhs in his close neighbourhood that he took into his service Zabita's son Ghulam Qadir, who had differences with his father. The Nawab granted to him robes of honour, tents, elephants, horses, Rs. 12,000 in cash, and a contingent of 2,000 troops to command. This step was chiefly taken to counteract the effect of Zabita Khan's hostile intention.[2]

About the end of November Shafi who had been appointed Mir Bakhshi made preparations to lead an expedition to repress the Sikhs, but he was called to Agra shortly afterwards. Thus the Sikhs were again left free by the Mughal Government.[3]

The Sikhs appear on the Ganga

In January, 1783, the Sikhs under the leadership of Baghel Singh approached Anupshahar on the Ganga in the Bulandshahar district, 190 kms from Delhi, and ravaged the country in the neighbourhood. They were contemplating to cross the river into Rohilkhand, when the forces of the Nawab of Oudh appeared on the opposite bank. Some English battalions under Colonel Knudson also arrived on the scene. The Sikhs consequently gave up their intention and concentrated their attention on the Doāb.

Colonel Sir John Cummings, commanding the English brigade at Anupshahar conveyed this news to Warren Hastings in a letter of the 27th January, 1783. A copy of it was sent to John Bristow, Resident at Lucknow, and J. Neave, his Assistant seeking permission of the Nawab to march to Anupshahar with the troops

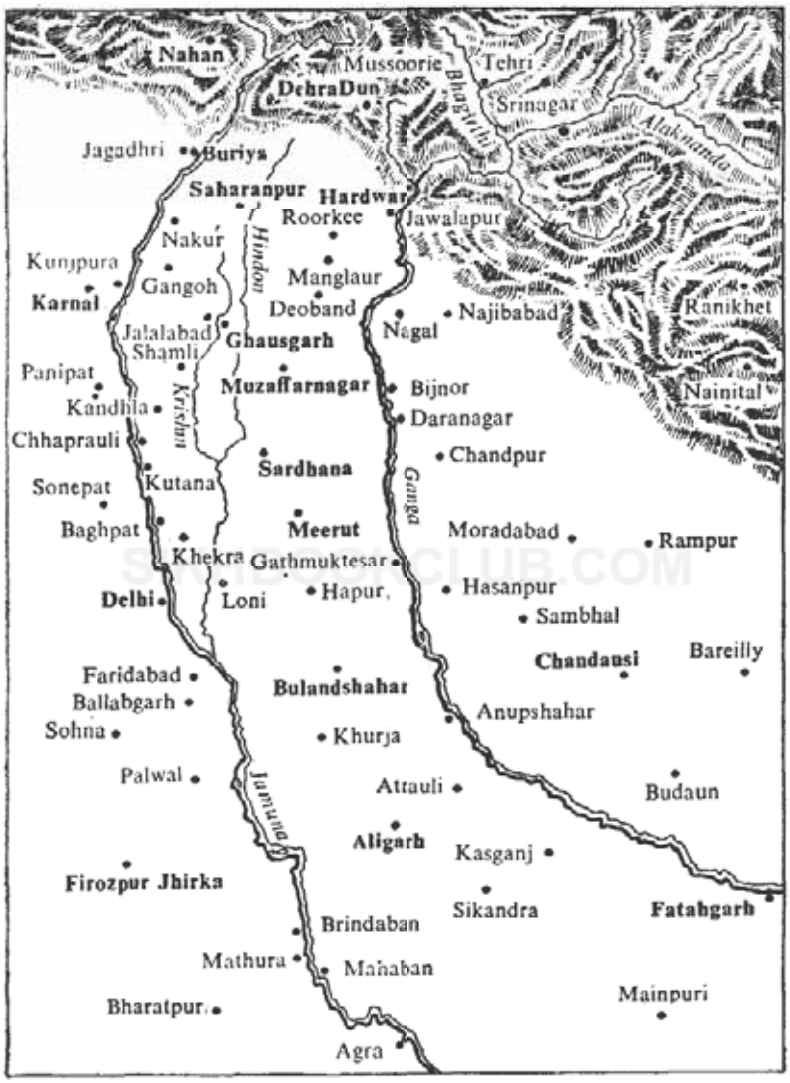
[1]On November 3 it was recorded that grain was selling in Delhi at 10 seers to the rupee.

[2]"The Sicques," wrote Forster on his personal observation, "have reduced the largest portion of the territory of Zabitah Khan leaving little more than the fort of Ghous Ghur" (*Journey*, I, 325).

[3]Maheshwar, I, 45; *Dilliyeihil*, I, 71, 75, 77, 84, 87.

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THE SIKH RAIDS IN THE GANGA DOAB AND ROHILKHAND



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under their command. The matter was referred to the Court of Directors, and they asked the Governor-General to keep "a watchful eye over the western frontier of our own provinces and those of the Vizier." They ordered a detachment from Fatahgarh to watch the ford of Anupshahar, and to charge its expenses to the Nawab.[1]

Forster who was travelling through Rohilkhand at this time wrote:

"In the beginning of the year 1783 a party of Sicques traversing the Ghous Ghur districts, approached the Ganges, where it forms the western limit of Rohilcund, with an intention of crossing the river, and invading the country of the Vizier. Being at that time in Rohilcund, I witnessed the terror and general alarm which prevailed amongst the inhabitants, who, deserting the open country, had retired into forts and places inaccessible to cavalry."[2]

G.R.C. Williams observed: "Despising Zabitah Khan, they continued the practice of sending each a few *sawars* across the river regularly every three or four months, and collecting taxes from their respective circles (*puttees*), just like the imperial land revenue. In fact, the whole tract north of Meerut may at this period be considered as Sikh territory, for his struggles with the Emperor had exhausted the Nuwab's resources, and the new Ameer-ul-Umra, Afrasiyab Khan, though lavish of advice seemed reluctant to afford him any substantial assistance in defending the frontier."[3]

The Raja of Garhwal rendered tributary

By this time the Sikhs had become supreme not only in the Panjab and the Ganga Doāb, but also in the lower hill country up to the banks of the Ganga. The Raja of Garhwal being unable to restrain the inroads of the Sikhs had sometime previously bought them off by the payment of an annual tribute of Rs. 4,000. This sum may appear rather insignificant at the present day; but in those days its value was much greater. Besides the Sikhs were content with having secured the submission of the Raja who remained as faithful to them as ever.

[1]*N.A.I.*, Foreign Department, 11 February, 1783; p. 819. Letters from Court, 21 September, 1783, no. 27-A, Paragraphs 16, 17; *C.P.C.*, VI, 788; *Calcutta Review*, LXI, 1875, p. 39.

[2]Forster, I, 325-26.

[3]*Calcutta Review*, LXI, 1875, p. 39.

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Forster saw two Sikh horsemen who had come to receive this tribute. They fared like princes, and so astonished was he at the reception accorded to them that he expressed his willingness to migrate into the soul of a Sikh, and exchange places with one of them. He recorded the following characteristic note:

"The 28th (February, 1783), at Dayrah (Dehra Dun), the residence of the deputy of the Siringnaghur (Garhwal) *rajah*. This small town, which is populous and neatly built, may be called the capital of the lower division of Siringnaghur, which includes a space of level country lying between a chain of scattered hills on the south, and the larger range of northern mountains. The Sicques have an unrestrained access into these parts through the southern hills, which are broken by small valleys; and, fearing no opposition from Zabitah Khan, they can at pleasure penetrate into the lower district of Siringnaghur. The chief resides at a town bearing the common name of the territory, which lies, I am informed, about one hundred miles to the north, and by the east Lall Dong. The inactivity of the present *rajah* has enabled the Sicques to exact from this country a regular tribute.[1]

"We proceeded to Kheynaspoor-ten *cosses*. At this place, I saw two Sicque horsemen, who had been sent from their country to receive the Siringnaghur tribute which is collected from the revenues of certain custom-houses. From the manner in which these men were treated, or rather treated themselves, I frequently wished for the power of migrating into the body of a Sicque for a few weeks—so well did these cavaliers fare. No sooner had they alighted, than beds were prepared for their repose, and their horses were supplied with green barley pulled out of the field. The *Kafilah* travellers were contented to lodge on the ground, and expressed their thanks for permission to purchase what they required; such is the difference between those who were in, and those who were out of power."[2]

[1]G.R.C. Williams states that the Sikhs "penetrated the Sewalik hills without opposition and advanced to Dehra, where they spared nothing save Guroo Ram Rae's temple," *Calcutta Review*, LXI, 1875, p. 39.

[2]Forster, I, 227-29; Cunningham, 117; *Gazetteer of Dehra Dun District*, p. 174. G.R.C. Williams says that "although this is the first well authenticated invasion of the Doon by the Sikhs, it is probable that they had already paid the valley hostile visits." *Calcutta Review*, LXI, 1875, p. 39.

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The Rajas of Nahan and other neighbouring hill states offer submission to the Sikhs

At this period in addition to the Raja of Garhwal, the rulers of the other neighbouring states situated between the Satluj and the Jamuna had submitted to the Sikhs. They agreed to pay an annual tribute, though not much, in token of acknowledgment of the supremacy of the Sikhs, and thus saved their territory from their ravages. The most powerful of them was the Raja of Nahan. How the Sikhs laid him under contribution is thus described by Forster: "A division of the Nhan country extends to the southward of the head of the Punjab, and bordering the country of the Sicques, they agreeably to a conduct observed with all their weaker neighbours, took possession of it. The Rajah armed himself to recover the districts in question,[1] but after a desultory warfare in which he acquired much military credit, he was obliged to sue for peace; nor were the conquered lands restored until he consented to remit a tribute of two thousand rupees to a certain Sicque chief. This sum you will doubtlessly deem trifling, and it is so in your country, where specie is plenty, and the mode of living comfortably luxurious and extravagant. But amongst these mountaineers, whose manners are rude and simple, who seek for little else than the necessaries of life, which are produced to them in great abundance, this amount is important, and to collect it, requires even oppressive exertion."[2]

The Sikhs plunder Ganga Doab up to Farrukhabad, February, 1783

The Sikhs were convinced that the Mughal Empire had lost all its past vigour and energy. It appeared to them like a flickering lamp which had run short of oil. Further a terrible famine prevailed all over northern India. In a body of 60,000, they marched towards Delhi under two most prominent leaders—Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and Baghel Singh Dhaliwal They passed by Delhi without creating any fuss, and commenced their business from Ghaziabad, 20 kms. south of Delhi. The place was thoroughly plundered. Bulandshahar, 50 kms. from Delhi was attacked next. Khurja, 83 kms. from Delhi, famous market for grain and ghi, was fully squeezed. Gian Singh writes: "When the Sikhs entered

[1]This refers to the regions of tahsils of Naraingarh and Jagadhri, in Ambala district.

[2]*Journey*, I, 231-32.

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this town, the people fled away. The Sikhs caught the rich men of the place, tied them to pillars and by severely beating them compelled them to disclose the places of their hidden treasures. When the Sikhs had looted the town, Baghel Singh and Jassa Singh spread a cloth, and asked the chiefs to give away one-tenth of their booty in cash for the service of the Guru. The sum collected amounted to a lakh of rupees. This money was spent on Hari Mandar at Amritsar."[1]

Aligarh 126 kms., Hathras 156 kms., Tundla 204 kms and Shikohabad 241 kms. from Delhi were sacked and vast quantities of spoil were acquired. Farrukhabad, 107 kms. from Shikohabad towards the east, was reached in a dash, and the town was besieged in the twinkling of an eye. Its Nawab was taken quite unaware. A good deal of gold, ornaments, diamonds, pearls and many costly articles fell into Baghel Singh's hands. Among them was a stick studded with diamonds worth Rs. 33,000 and a golden hubble-bubble (*huqqa*) to the value of Rs. 50,000.[2] On their way back they pillaged Agra. The enormous booty laden on camels, carts, horses and ponies escorted by 20,000 Sikhs was sent to the Panjab. The other Sikhs about 40,000 advanced towards Delhi.

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Sikh ravages in Delhi, March, 1783

This body lay encamped at Barari Ghat on the Jamuna, 16 kms. north of Delhi on March 8, 1783. From this place as a base they attacked Malka Ganj and Sabzi Mandi. These places were plundered and then set on fire. Many people were killed at Mughalpura. Prince Mirza Shikoh tried to check them near Qila Mahtabpur, but he suffered a defeat and fled away. On 9 March great panic prevailed in the city. Fazal Ali Khan came out to oppose them. In the engagement the son of Rao Dhiraj Ram of Pahari Dhiraj lost his life. The Sikhs broke through the Ajmeri gate and ravaged the whole area of Hauz Qazi.

The Government decided to recruit a force to cope with the situation. On 10 March Abdul Ahad Khan Majd-ud-daulah rode through the city and ordered the clerical establishment to record the script rolls of fresh recruits. The inhabitants of the city were so much alarmed that they took shelter inside the fort. Mirza

[1]Gian Singh, *Panth Prakash*, 912.

[2]All these articles fell into the hands of the British at the time of escheat of Baghel Singh's estate later on

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Shafi and his brother Zain-ul-Abidin were urgently summoned to relieve the capital of the Sikh menace. Accordingly Zain-ul-Abidin Khan crossed the Jamuna at Baghpat and encamped in the evening in the garden of Mahaldar Khan. Shafi left Sikandra on 15 March.[1]

Begam Samru invited to Delhi

It was considered essential to invite Begam Samru to Delhi to negotiate with the Sikhs. A fast messenger was deputed to her at Sardhana, about 90 kms. east of Delhi. Her name was Zeb-un-Nisa. She was the daughter of Asad Khan, a Muslim of Arab descent who had settled at Kutana, 60 kms. north of Delhi on the Jamuna in Muzaffarnagar district. She was born about 1753. After her marriage with Reinhard, better known as Samru, a German adventurer who had received the *jagir* of Sardhana from Najaf Khan, she exercised all his political rights. On his death in 1778, she assumed the headship of Sardhana about 50 kms. east of Kutana in Meerut district. She commanded a force consisting of five battalions of infantry, a body of irregular horse, and about 300 European officers and gunners with forty cannon.

In 1781 the Begam embraced the Roman Catholic religion under the name of Johanna. Her troops were then in the charge of a German named Pauli, who was assassinated by Muhammad Beg Hamdani in 1783. Endowed by nature with a masculine gallantry and a correct judgment, she managed to hold her country and preserve her authority during the successive administrations of Najaf Khan, Afrasiyab Khan and Mirza Shafi. "Colonel Skinner had often, during his service with the Marhattas, seen her then a beautiful young woman, leading on her troops to the attack in person and displaying, in the midst of carnage, the greatest intrepidity and presence of mind." "Contrary to the practice of women in this country, the Begum Sumroo always wears a turban, generally damson colour, which becomes her very much, and is put on with great taste."[2]

She was a faithful and loyal subject of the Mughal Emperor. She was at the beck and call of Shah Alam II, who called her his daughter. She was equally devoted to the British Government, and

[1] *Delhi Chronicle*, 350-51; Khair-ud-din, II, 66; Sarkar, III, 255.

[2] Compton, 400-10; Beale, 373; Buckland, 372; Sleeman, 377-99; *A Tour through the Upper provinces of Hindustan*, 159. She died in January, 1836.

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was employed in negotiations with the Mughal court and the Sikhs. The Sikh sardars were so charmed by her personality that a request from her seldom went unheeded.

Jassa Singh Ahluwalia unceremoniously sits on the throne in the Red Fort, March 11, 1783

Meanwhile the Sikhs continued plundering various parts of the city. The booty seized was deposited at *Majnu-ka-Tila* under a strong guard. Just at this time Jassa Singh Ramgarhia arrived at Delhi from Hissar. A few years previously he had been expelled from the Panjab by a combination of Sikh sardars headed by Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. He had built his fortune in the Hissar region. On hearing the news of the presence of the Sikhs in Delhi, he came there to share in the spoil. He commanded a force of 10,000 men.

The Sikhs made for the Red Fort on March 11, 1783. The Emperor and his courtiers hid themselves in their private apartments. The Sikhs entered the *Diwan-e-Am*. In a fit of enthusiasm they fulfilled the prophecy of Nawab Kapur Singh who had called Jassa Singh Ahluwalia *Padishah*. The Sikhs made him sit on the throne and waved peacock feathers tied in a knot over his head. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia condemned this action. He was joined by several other Sikh chiefs in the protest. Both sides drew out swords and were going to attack each other. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia did not like the fratricidal conflict to take place in the imperial capital, as it would have ruined their prestige completely. He immediately declined the highest honour thrust upon him. The Sikhs then seized on whatever they could lay their hands. Small cannon were taken possession of by many of them. They loaded their goods in carts and on camels, and nearly half of them retired to their homes. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia captured four guns and a large variegated slab of stone, $6' \times 4' \times 0.75'$ in dimension. It is still preserved in the Ramgarhia Bunga at Amritsar]. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia lost distinction of royalty twice, once in 1761 and again now. He passed away a little later the same year, probably due to the great shock and dishonour.[1]

[1]Ratan Singh Bhangu, 539-55; Gian Singh, *Panth Prakash*, 912-3; Raj *Khalsa*, 616; Kartar Singh Kalaswalia, *Tegh Khalsa*, 237-38: *Delhi Chronicle*, 350-51; Khair-ud-din, II, 66; Sarkar, III, 255; James Browne's *Dispatches*, 1782-85.

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Baghal Singh controls the Capital for eight months, March to December, 1783

Begam Samru arrived in the capital on March 12, 1783. The Emperor told her all about the Sikhs and sought her assistance in persuading the Sikhs to retire from Delhi and spare the crownlands in Rohtak and Karnal districts from plunder. She immediately opened negotiations with Baghel Singh. She came into the camp of the Sardar. Baghel Singh showed willingness to make peace with the Emperor. The following terms were accepted by the Begam and approved by the Emperor under his signatures and royal seal:

1. The major portion of the Sikh army would immediately retire to their homes in the Panjab.
2. Baghel Singh would remain in the capital with 4,000 troops.
3. He was allowed to build seven gurdwaras at the places sacred to Sikh religion in the city of Delhi.
4. His headquarters would be established in Sabzi Mandi.
5. To meet the expenses of his troops and the construction of gurdwaras he was permitted to charge six annas in the rupee (37.5 per cent) of all the income from octroi duties in the capital.
6. The Sikhs would not misbehave in any way during their stay in the capital.
7. The construction of the gurdwaras must be finished as early as possible, but not beyond the current year in any case.

Baghel Singh took charge of all the octroi posts as well as of the Kotwali in Chandni Chauk. Five-eighths of the whole collection was regularly and punctually conveyed to the Government treasury everyday. Perfect peace and order was established in the city as the Sikh horsemen patrolled the streets and suburbs day and night.

Mirza Shafi was the Regent and Commander-in-Chief of the Mughal Empire. He together with Afrasiyab Khan remained busy in the Agra region in suppressing the revolt of Muhammad Beg Hamdani from January to September, 1783. Shafi was assassinated by Hamdani on September 23, 1783. Afrasiyab Khan again became Regent. This post he held up to November 2, 1784 when he was murdered by Shafi's brother Zain-ul-Abidin Khan. During these thirteen months "the affairs of the central government drifted on in still greater confusion and weakness under his effete rule."

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Construction of gurdwaras in Delhi

The main body of the Sikhs retired from Delhi on 12th March. The Sikhs received a cash present of three lakhs of rupees as *karahprasad*. Baghel Singh remained behind at the head of his contingent of 4,000 to build gurdwaras. First he built a gurdwara in Teliwara in memory of Mata Sundari and Mata Sahib Devi, wives of Guru Gobind Singh. They had resided there for a time. The second gurdwara was erected in Jaisinghpura where Guru Hari Krishan had stayed in the bungalow of Maharaja Jai Singh of Jaipur. It is now called gurdwara Bangla Sahib. Four tombs were constructed on the bank of the Jamuna where Guru Hari Krishan, Mata Sundari, Mata Sahib Devi and Ajit Singh, the adopted son of Mata Sundari, had been cremated, and a gurdwara was erected there.

Two places were connected with Guru Tegh Bahadur. One was at the Kotwali where the Guru was beheaded, and the other was at Rikabganj where his headless body was cremated by Lakhi Banjara. At both these places mosques had been erected by the Muslims. Baghel Singh first turned his attention to Rikabganj. The gurdwara could be built after demolishing the mosque. This created great excitement and sensation in the Muslim population. In a huge body they waited upon the Emperor. They represented that under no circumstances would they allow demolition of the mosques. Let the whole city be reduced to ashes, but the mosques would survive. The Emperor replied that they should have informed him of their views before he gave his approval in writing. He promised to discuss the matter with the Sikh chief.

An imperial official visited Baghel Singh, who said that Muslims had demolished gurdwara built on October 1, 1778, with Emperor's consent. Baghel Singh agreed to meet all the leaders of opposition. A body of about one hundred prominent persons including leading mullas and maulvis called on him. Baghel Singh closely studied their views, tried to pacify them and said he would discuss the affair with his Sikhs. He asked them to meet him again after a week. He made a note of the jagirs held by these leaders and the estates dedicated to the mosques. The Sikh sardars of Karnal and Ambala districts were instructed to march immediately and lay waste the jagirs which were mostly situated in the Ganga Doāb. His own troops were kept in alert to act at a moment's notice. Frightful reports began to pour into Delhi from all sides. The

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leaders finding their property in a grave danger called on Baghel Singh in twos or threes. Baghel Singh secured written approval from them for the dismantling of the mosque, and forwarded the papers to the Emperor who advised to execute the scheme without any further delay. Two thousand Sikhs delivered the assault on Rikabganj mosque which was completely wiped out in half the day. The foundation of the gurdwara was immediately laid amidst chanting of hymns from the holy Granth and distribution of consecrated food (*karahprasad*).

Baghel Singh now collected men and material for building the gurdwara of Sisganj. The Muslim population got ready to oppose this move. This time they did not depend upon the Emperor and their leaders. They made preparations to offer resistance. Baghel Singh did not know the exact place where the Guru had been beheaded. An aged *Mashkan* (Muslim water carrier woman) came to his rescue. She said that as told by her father who had washed the place after the Guru's execution, the Hindu *Pir* sat on a wooden *chauki* facing east inside the compound wall of the mosque, and his head had fallen in front of him. The imperial ministers intervened. They assured the audience that no harm would be done to the mosque. Duly a portion of the wall was pulled down and in the compound the gurdwara was allowed to be built. The sixth gurdwara was set up at *Majnu Kā Tila* where Guru Nanak and Mardana and Guru Hargobind had stayed. The seventh gurdwara was raised in Moti Bagh where Guru Gobind Singh had lived. All these gurdwaras were endowed liberally by grants of a number of villages to everyone of them.[1]

Baghel Singh's interview with the Emperor

The construction of the gurdwaras was completed by the end of November, 1783. Baghel Singh decided to retire from the capital early in December. He sent a message of gratitude and respects to the Emperor. Till then no interview had taken place between Baghel Singh and Shah Alam II. Every courtier who called on the Sikh chief had a good word for him. The Emperor was eager to meet him. A royal messenger visited him. Baghel Singh said his meeting with the Emperor was a difficult matter. They had pledged

[1]Ratan Singh Bhangu, 554-60: Kartar Singh Kalaswalia, *Tegh Khalsa*, 240-45; *Raj Khalsa*, 575-77; Forrest, *Selections*, III, 1124; Maheshwar, I, 107; *Dilliyethil*, I, 84; *Delhi Chronicle*, 311.

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never to bow before any Mughal and he would never go alone but would be accompanied by a contingent of his troops, and all would be fully armed. Further, while passing through the streets any unbecoming remark or action by the people would enrage his men whom he might not be able to control. All his conditions were accepted.

A day and time for the interview was fixed. It was announced that along the route to be followed by the Sikhs the inhabitants should keep indoors, and butchers' shops must remain closed. On the fixed day a minister came to the Sikh camp with a number of mace-bearers and announcers.

The Sikh procession started from Sabzi Mandi. Ahead of all were the Mughal announcers informing the people of the approach of the Sikhs. They were followed by a body of Mughal mace-bearers. A Small body of Sikhs in arms riding on fine and decorated horses were behind them. Baghel Singh fully armed followed sitting in a howdah on an elephant. A Sikh was waving peacock feathers over his head. Another body of the Sikh soldiers formed the tail of the cavalcade. All entered the gate of the Red Fort. Baghel Singh and four other sardars including Duleha Singh dismounted, while the troopers remained on horseback. They were led into the *Diwan-e-Am*. Their guide performed obeisance on their behalf. The Sikhs shouted loudly their greetings *Sat Sri Akal*. The Prime Minister offered a chair to Baghel Singh, the other nobles attended the other sardars. They presented bows and arrows to the Emperor. Usual courtesies were exchanged. After a while Baghel Singh was given a khilat, fully caprisoned elephant and a horse and a necklace of pearls. The other sardars also received khilats. Baghel Singh was granted 12.5 per cent of the octroi duties of Delhi to be remitted to him at his headquarters at Chhalondi annually, on the condition that he would check the Sikhs from attacking the capital.[1]

[1]Ratan Singh Bhangu, 560 65; *Raj Khalsa*, 578; Kalaswalia, 242-44. Ratan Singh and Gian Singh have described in detail an incident, which was common in the life of the Sikhs in those days. They say that the Emperor expressed a desire to see the Sikhs in the actual act of plundering. Baghel Singh gave a demonstration in a sugarcane field adjoining the Red Fort on the bank of the river Jamuna. A few Sikhs pulled up sugarcanes, while others snatched them leading to mutual wrangles and scuffles.

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CHAPTER 12

Beginning of Diplomatic Relations with the British Government, 1783

James Browne's Embassy

The Sikh domination at Delhi and in the Ganga Doab deeply alarmed the British Governor-General, Warren Hastings, at Calcutta. He was contemplating to establish British authority at Agra and Delhi in the manner it had been established at Banaras and Lucknow. The appearance of the warlike Sikhs on the scene threatened his plans. In order to acquire full knowledge about the Sikhs and to checkmate their influence diplomatically, he appointed George Forster to travel across the Sikh territory in the disguise of a Muslim dealer in horses. The diplomatic post was assigned to James Browne. He was nominated as the British "Agent and the Minister" at the Court of Delhi on August 20, 1782.

About his appointment Francklin states: "The real cause of Major Browne's arrival was in consequence of orders he had received from his Government, not to decline any overture that might be made for affording a military aid to the royal cause. The Seiks had for several years back, by their predatory incursions into Doo Ab and Rohilcund, excited alarm in the Government of Asuf Al Dowla; and Mr Hastings, the British Governor, with his usual discernment, deemed the exertions of the court of Delhi might, at the present juncture of affairs, prove a beneficial counterpoise to the rising power of the Seiks."[1]

G.R.C. Williams puts it more clearly: "By this time the threatening attitude of the Sikhs had excited the apprehensions of Warren Hastings himself, who deputed a Major Browne to Delhi (1784) with the express object of organising a confederacy against them,

[1]Francklin, *Shah Aulum*, 115-16.

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if possible; but the embassy came to nothing."[1] Warren Hastings instructed him: "You must study the character, connection, influence and power of the several competitors for the possession of the King's favour or the exercise of his authority, the state, views and relations of the independent chiefs and states whose territory borders on his."

Browne left Calcutta at the end of August, 1782. He met Mirza Shafi, Regent of the Empire, at Agra on February 26, 1783, and stayed there till November, 1783. On the Regent's murder Browne came to Delhi on December 11, 1783. He tried very hard to win over the Court party in favour of the British government to enable it to establish its authority over the Mughal Empire. His main supporter was Abdul Ahad Khan Majd-ul-daulah.

Browne was still in Delhi when in April, 1784, Prince Jahandar Shah (Jawan Bakht), the heir-apparent, in his eagerness to succeed to the throne with the British support, escaped from Delhi to Lucknow. To counteract Browne's designs, Afrasiyab arrested his close friend Abdul Ahad on May 30, 1784, and imprisoned him in the Aligarh fort. The Prince also gained nothing by his flight. He died as a British pensioner at Banaras.[2]

Browne's negotiations with the Sikhs

Baghel Singh was completely absorbed in his plan of constructing the gurdwaras in the teeth of opposition from the Muslim population of the city. He had no time to divert his attention towards carrying on correspondence and negotiations with other powers. This business was attended by his vakil Lakhpat Rae. From Agra Browne got into touch with him. He wrote letters and also interviewed several Sikhs who were roaming about everywhere. Browne collected information from them, and then compiled his account under the title "History of the Origin and Progress of the Sicks" for the information of the Governor-General. It was later on published in his *India Tracts*. In reply to Browne's communication, Lakhpat Rae stated stated that notable Sikh chiefs such as Jassa Singh Ahluwalia "who is the highest and greatest and in that country called Badshah Singh," and Baghel Singh including many others were willing to establish friendly relations with the British Government.

Browne's reply dated the 27th April, 1783, held out prospects of

[1] *Calcutta Review*, LXI, 1875, p. 40; *C.P.C.*, VII, 315 (10).
[2] Ibid.

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"sincere friendship" on the condition of obedience to Shah Alam II and laying aside the practice of plundering the Ganga Doāb and the crownlands.

Lakhpat Rae expressed his surprise at this criticism: "What was commanded concerning the Khalsa, that they have habituated their hearts to plunder and devastation produced excess of astonishment." He asserted that "the population and tranquillity of the people and arrangement of the affairs of the Empire" were the chief desires of the Sikhs. He declared that their presence in the Ganga Doab was due to the fact "that the *Sardars* of Hindustan do not abide by their engagements." He suggested that their friendship with the British Government would result in an amicable settlement of such affairs.

Lakhpat Rae sent another letter enclosed with the epistles from Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Lahna Singh, Baghel Singh and Sahib Singh of Patiala, some of which were delivered by Khushhal Singh and others by Mangal Sain. The letters contained declaration of mutual good-will and co-operation.

About the conduct of these messengers Browne wrote: "I have conversed with several Sicks, who were sent to me by different chiefs on complimentary messages; and I perceived a manly boldness in their manner and conversation, very unlike the other inhabitants of Hindostan, owing no doubt to the freedom of their government."[1]

Browne sent a reply on the 5th August, 1783. He again recorded a protest against the unlawful activities of the Sikhs: "By reason of disobedience and rebellion to his majesty and oppression and ill usage of God's people, they are universally accounted ill-advised, otherwise the fidelity of these noble chiefs to their engagements and their firmness to treaties would be clearer than the sun."

On the same date while replying to Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Browne wrote: "I am grateful for the favour and on understanding the good qualities and excellent disposition and surpassing kindness of one unequalled in the whole world which were understood in detail from the writings of Lala Lakhpat Rai, joy was occasioned to my affectionate heart."

Lahna Singh, one of the Lahore chiefs, in the course of his letter had stated: "The whole empire is God Almighty's, to every one He

[1] *India Tracts*, II (X).

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wishes He gives, or it depends on the sword." Browne's reply to his letter contained flattery as well as sharp criticism: "On the receipt of your glorious epistle, which was replete with friendship, increase of joy and cheerfulness was summoned." He then continued: "Several of your *sardars* have contracted the bad habit of plunder and devastation, and boasted of their opposition and rebellion to his majesty and the nobles of the Presence."

In reply to Meharban [Baghel?] Singh's letter sent through Mangal Sain, Browne expressed his joy on the receipt of the letter and displeasure at the misbehaviour of the Sikhs: "Your epistle of friendship which was full of the jewels and the ornaments of friendship arrived in a happy season and created pleasure." Then his criticism followed: "Many chiefs of that place had adopted intentions of war and plunder and violence and oppression to the people, and besides had opposition and enmity to his majesty and the noble *omrahs*."

The letter of Sahib Singh of Patiala was delivered by Missar Shitab Chand. Browne in acknowledgement reiterated the same criticism: "These chiefs have made the system and custom of plunder and rapine their distinguishing symbol, and entertain opposition and enmity to his majesty to such a degree that the sublime palace[1] from want of vigilance did not remain protected from the attacks of this nation."[2]

The famine of 1783

The diplomatic correspondence was going on at a time when the country was facing a great calamity. In April, 1783, as evere famine broke out in the Panjab. In 1781 and 1782 there had been little rain and so the harvest was poor; and the winter rain of 1782-83 completely failed. Hence there was no *rabi* crop of April, 1783. The drought which had been raging for the past two years, and had become most acute in that year became known as the *Chalisa* because it occurred in the year 1840 of Bikrami Samvat. So terrible was the visitation that thousands of persons died of absolute starvation. The contemporary Harcharandas says that in April, 1784, (it should be 1783), thousands of persons lost their lives from star-

[1]This refers to Sikh penetration into the Red Fort and its pillage on March 11, 1783.

[2]James Browne's *Dispatches*, 1782 to 1785, Foreign Department, 41A, nos. 19-20, 22-29 (N.A.I.); *C.P.C.*, VII, 315 (13-14, 17-27, 47).

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vation in the city of Delhi in five or six days.[1] Tanks and ponds ran dry, and cattle perished of hunger and thirst. People lived on wild fruits of the jungle trees such as *tind* and *bārwa*, and the cattle kept alive on the leaves and bark of trees as *jal*, *kair*, *beri*, etc. Children wandered about to feed on berries of the forest and fell an easy prey to wild beasts "who shaking off all fear of man, fed upon human flesh in open day, and in the most public places."

This famine affected in general almost the whole of northern India from Multan to Bengal; but it was extremely severe in the Panjab. As we proceeded to the east its effects grew less and less in intensity; but even there its severity can be estimated from the account of an 'Old Resident' of Aligarh given in the *Delhi Gazette* of the 6th June, 1874: "As told by many persons who witnessed it, the disastrous circumstance which occurred during Sindhia's rule and prior to De Boigne's administration known by the people as the '*Chaleesa Kaul*,' the severe famine of AD 1783, in a considerable degree desolated the country and the many ruinous high mounds still visible in the district owe their origin to this calamity. The inhabitants either fell victims, or fled to other parts where they met a similar fate, for the famine was a general one. It was described to me by those who lived then, that for the two previous years the rains were very unfavourable, and the produce very scanty; the third year, AD, 1783, the people entertained strong hopes that the season would be a propitious one: but sad was their condition when they found the rainy months, '*Assaur* and *Sawan*' [July-August], passing off with a scorching sun. In '*Bhadoon*' [September] they had clouds but no rain, and when the calamity came all hopes were gone; the price of grain was enormous and with difficulty it could be procured; thousands died of sheer starvation within their walls and streets, and the native government rendered no assistance to ameliorate or relieve the wants of their unfortunate subjects. Children were left to go astray and find their sustenance in the wild berries of the *peepul*, *burrh* and *goolur*, and thus became an easy prey to the wild beasts who in numbers roved round the country in open day living on human carcases. About the middle of September or '*Kooar*,' the rains fell and so regularly that the grain which was thrown in the fields in the two previous years and did not generate for want of moisture, now came up profusely, and abundant was the produce. The state

[1]Elliot, VIII, 230.

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of things gradually changed for the better in October and November. An old Brahman of Secundra Rao narrated that some years before 1780 the harvest was so plentiful that on the occasion he built a house which was on a very high plinth: he filled the plinth instead of with mud with an inferior coarse small grain called '*kodun*,' selling at that time uncommonly cheap, much lower than the cost of mud would be; when the famine came he dug up the coarse grain, which was found good, and sold it, and with the money he made his house a *pucka* one; besides gaining a large sum in coin."[1]

The south-eastern Panjab or Haryana lay in utter ruins. Small villages were completely deserted and people took refuge in large villages. Starvation left no strength in them. "Some died helplessly in their villages, others fell exhausted on the way." Thousands of fugitives flocked from Bikaner into Haryana in their vain search of food for themselves and fodder for their cattle, the greater number of whom perished. "But for the berries found in the wild brush-wood, the distress would have been even greater. Stories are told of parents devouring their children; and it is beyond a doubt that children were during this fatal year gladly sold to any one who would offer a few handfuls of grain as their price."

From this time originated new land tenures in many tracts particularly in the Hissar district. After the famine had passed over, the country was re-peopled. But few of the original inhabitants returned to occupy their old homes. Those who returned found their lands cultivated by recent immigrants.[2]

In the fertile and populous districts of the central Panjab wheat was sold from 1-1/3 to 2-1/3 seers per rupee, and that also could be obtained with difficulty. The inhabitants fled to the Ganga valley, Kashmir and the northern hills. So many people died that bodies were thrown into the wells; mothers threw their children into the rivers. The seeds of the acacia tree and cotton plant were eagerly devoured. To add to their misfortunes an insect called *tittan* appeared which destroyed all herbage. The cattle ate the insect and their milk turned blood-red. The people used butter, but threw the butter-milk of which they are so fond. "One blade of *chari* is said to have been sold for the fabulous sum of Rs. 2; the consequence

[1] Keene's *Fall*, 153-54.
[2] *The Rajas of the Punjab*, 54; *Hissar District Gazeteer*, 13.

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was that the cattle nearly all died or were eaten up by the starving Muhammadans!"

Even in Hazara, the northern-most part of the province "this famine fell with terrible severity. Grain sold at $3\frac{1}{2}$ to $4\frac{1}{2}$ seers per rupee, and was not to be had even at that price when the famine was at its height; and popular accounts describe the district as nearly depopulated."[1]

The high prices of grain continued as late as May, 1784. The Calcutta Gazette for Thursday, 13th May, 1784, records the following rates: "The 12th—Wheat is now selling at Battalah [Patiala], 9 seers; at Lahore, 4 seers; and at Jummoo, 3 seers per rupee."[2]

The famine was followed by terrible consequences. The country was depopulated as thousands of persons died of disease and distress. "The country swarmed with bands of robbers and dacoits, and the state of anarchy was almost inconceivable."[3]

The Sikhs set out to plunder the Doāb, May-June, 1783

Hard pressed by the famine a large body of the Sikhs, about 15,000 horse and 20,000 foot, along with their women and children, retired from the Cis-Satluj territory to the upper Ganga Doāb. They crossed the Jamuna at the Buriya *ghat* and plundered many places in Saharanpur and Muzaffarnagar districts. Bhag Singh and Baghel Singh who had their *rākhi* here visited Zabita Khan at Ghausgarh. There was disagreement between them as regards the

[1] *Lahore District Gazetteer*, 37; *Sialkot District Gazetteer*, 18, 23; *Gujrat District Gazetteer*, 19·20; *Jhelum District Gazetteer*, 47; Wace's *Hazara Settlement Report*, 1868, 74; *Report on the Census of the Punjab*, 1881, Book I, p. 49.

[2] Seton-Karr's *Selections*, I, 14; *The Punjab States Gazetteers*, XVII, A, 297, gives the following prices as they prevailed in Jind:

Wheat	5 to 6 seers per rupee	
Gram	do	do
Barley	6 to 7	do
Pulses	5	do

Bute Shah, 227b, says that at this time wheat was sold in Lahore at the rate of 2 to 3 seers to the rupee; and at Delhi, Farrukhabad and Lucknow from 5 to 6 seers.

In 1876 H.G. Keen estimated the fall in the value of money to three-eighths. [Keene's *Fall*, 152; Keene's *Hindustan*, 406-7.]

[3] *The Rajas of the Punjab*, 54. G.R.C. Williams states that this famine was accompanied by a pestilence, "which culminated in an outbreak of cholera at Hurdwar during the fair of April, 1784 AD," *Calcutta Review*, LXI. 1875, pp. 39-40.

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proper division of their shares, and they sought Zabita Khan's assistance in the matter. Zabita Khan refused to intervene for fear of displeasing one of them, and advised them to settle it amicably between themselves. This offended them slightly, and they plundered two villages near Jalalabad. Here they were opposed by the inhabitants and Nahar Singh Gujar; but the Sikhs were victorious.[1]

To prevent further immigration of the Sikhs into the Doāb Mirza Shafi was sent to check the progress of the Sikhs on the Jamuna. Shafi marched along the eastern bank of the river as far as Kairana and then crossed over into the Panipat district. Knowing the Sikhs he came to terms with them.[2]

On the 2nd June, 1783, Kazam Ali Khan was appointed *thanadar* of the Hasanpur *parganah* where a fort had been erected to provide a shelter against the Sikhs.

On the 3rd June Bhanga Singh and Gurdit Singh ravaged the villages of the Kairana *parganah*. Mir Fazal Ali, the *amil* of the place, came out of his fort to oppose them; but he was slain along with thirty other men. The same day Ghanshyam Das wrote from Ghausgarh that Bhag Singh and Mehar Singh visited Zabita Khan and presented him with a bow and a *khes*. They stated that Ugar Singh and Diwan Singh were coming to wait upon him in order to get their dispute about *rākhi* decided by him.

On the 5th June Zabita Khan wrote to Zain-ul-Abidin Khan to march from Shamli to Jhinjhana, Bidauli and Lakhnauti. He suggested that after leaving his heavy baggage at Lakhnauti he should cross the Jamuna and create disturbances in the Sikh territory with a view to divert their attention from the Doāb.

On the 6th June it was reported that 4,000 Sikhs were roaming about near Baghpat and had ravaged four villages. The grain market of Farrukhnagar was also plundered. The Emperor despatched two pairs of messengers to get news about the movements of the Sikhs. He summoned Mirza Shafi, Zain-ul-Abidin Khan and Zabita Khan to the court.

The news arrived that the Sikhs had reached Barari Ghat and were trying to cross the Jamuna. The inhabitants of Mughalpura, Sabzi Mandi and other suburbs, terrified at the approach of the

[1] *Dilliyethil*, 1, 96; British Museum, *Persian Akhbarat*, Or. 25021, folio 102a.
[2] *Dilliyethil*, 1, 84.

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Sikhs, took shelter inside the walled town of Delhi. The Emperor personally visited them, and instructed Majd-ul-daulah and Mahdi Quli Khan to take proper steps against the Sikhs.

On the 7th June a news-letter from Agra stated that Rana Chhatar Singh had sent Dan Shah to the Sikhs asking them to take service with him; but the Sikhs did not agree.

On 10th June Badal Beg Khan's letter came from Panipat stating that Raja Gajpat Singh of Karnal had visited him with his son. He came to an agreement with the Raja and conferred a *khilat* upon him. Fresh news of the Sikh disturbances in the neighbourhood of Delhi came and the Emperor announced that he would adopt suitable measures against them after consulting Mahadji Sindhia. On the 11th June the Sikhs retired towards Sonepat. On the 15th June they were at Samalkha.

Afrasiyab Khan was asked to pursue the Sikhs; but he stated that his troops were clamouring for the arrears of their pay, and were not prepared to undertake any expedition without money.

On the 13th June Zabita Khan was encamped at Basi on the Jamuna. He consulted Maulvi Ataullah, and came to the conclusion that Zain-ul-Abidin should be induced to cross the Jamuna into the Sikh country, and devastate their villages He sent the Maulvi and Jamal Khan to him for this purpose. The Mirza complained of the paucity of funds to pay his troops; and Zabita Khan offered him ten thousand rupees. Zain-ul-Abidin refused to cross the Jamuna owing to the rise of water in the river. Some cart-loads of balls and gunpowder from Ghausgarh arrived in Zabita's camp. The *'amil* of the *parganah* Gharaunda (18 kms south of Karnal) reported that nearly fifty Sikhs plundered his village. He attacked them. The fighting lasted for nearly an hour, and the Sikhs shortly afterwards retired.

On the 16th June the Emperor asked Majd-ul-daulah to issue instructions to Shafi to encamp at Delhi as the Sikhs were likely to renew their depredations after the rains. Zain-ul-Abidin Khan cantoned at Kairana. The Sikh chiefs including Diwan Singh, Bhag Singh and Rae Singh set up their cantonment at Buriya and thus all had a respite for the duration of the rainy season. On the 27th June, Zabita Khan granted one *doshala* each to Badan Singh and Mahtab Singh, the collectors of *rākhi* appointed by Tara Singh and Karam Singh.[1]

[1]British Museum, *Persian Akhbarat*, Or. 25021, folios 94b, 102a, 105a, 106a, 110a-b, 111b, 116a-b, 118a-b, 123a-b, 127a-b, 128a, 134a 135a-b, 137a-b, 139a, 142b, 143a, 193a.

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Favourable Delhi politics to the Sikhs, September, 1783

On the approach of the rainy season the Sikhs returned to their homes as usual. They did not remain idle during the three months of the rains. They closely watched the Delhi politics which was daily growing more and more favourable to them. At this time keen rivalry was going on among the four lieutenants of Najaf Khan—Afrasiyab Khan, Najaf Quli Khan, Mirza Shafi and Muhammad Beg Hamdani. Among them Shafi was the most capable general and straightforward and open-hearted fellow. Afrasiyab possessed no military talent or skill; but he had secured a large part of Najaf Khan's wealth. Najaf Quli was not a man of great worth, and spent his time in the enjoyment of wine and women. Hamdani excelled all in intrigue and diplomacy. He was also a good soldier and able general. Afrasiyab succeeded Najaf in the offices of Regent and Mir Bakhshi; but he was deprived of these high posts after five months in September, 1782. His successor Mirza Shafi held his position only for a month; but he regained it after an interval of one month. Shafi, however, fell a victim to the intrigues of Afrasiyab and Hamdani. Afrasiyab enjoyed the full confidence of Shafi. Secretly he was in league with Hamdani. A plot was hatched to kill Shafi. Afrasiyab arranged a meeting between Shafi and Hamdani on September 23, 1783. At the meeting Shafi raised his arms to embrace Hamdani who seized them in his iron grip, while Hamdani's nephew, Ismail Beg, thrust his dagger into the stomach of Shafi. A servant of Hamdani leapt upon the prey and immediately cut off Shafi's head. In his death the Mughal Empire lost its last best soldier and general. Hingane reported to Poona: "Muhammad Shafi is dead. The whole Hindustan is lying defenceless. No sword for fighting is left in India, September, 1783." Afrasiyab again became Regent.[1]

Zain-ul-Abidin Khan, the elder brother of Shafi, though less prominent in politics, was built of sterner stuff and could use cunning and deceit to repel fraud and treachery. He held estates consisting of eleven *mahal* in the Meerut district; but these were transferred by Abdul Ahad to his own son-in-law. An insult was added to injury, and the Sikhs found a ready ally in him in their depredations.[2]

[1] *Dilliyethil*, 1, 91; Sarkar, III, 180.
[2] *Dilliyethil*, I, 96, 98. 124; Sarkar, III, 182.

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In order to take revenge for the murder of his brother and the loss of his own estates Zain-ul-Abidin Khan set the Sikhs to plunder the crownlands in the Panipat, Sonepat and Delhi districts in October, 1783.[1]

On the 28th October, 1783, it was reported to the Emperor that the Sikhs were lying in wait to plunder the caravan of Badarpur. The Emperor despatched Mir Abdullah to protect the caravan.[2]

On the 29th October Jai Singh Rae reported to Zabita Khan that he had received a letter from Rae Singh of Buriya stating that he, with Jodh Singh and Charas Singh, was coming to Saharanpur to realize *rākhi*.

On the 1st November it was reported that about 500 Sikhs were causing tumult at Jawalapur near Hardwar.

On the 3rd November Rao Qutb-ud-din Khan and Mansukh Rae from Ghausgarh reported that another batch of nearly 500 Sikhs had crossed into the Doāb to realize *rākhi*.

On the 4th November Zain-ul-Abidin's letter from Baghpat was received by Zabita Khan at Ghausgarh. It stated that Jassa Singh Kalal of Kapurthala was dead, and Jassa Singh Thoka who had been expelled by him from his territories a year ago had gone first to assist Amar Singh, and then had retired to the Panjab; and hence the intensity of the Sikh ravages would not be so great as expected.[3]

On the 6th November Zabita Khan received a petition from Rae Singh, the Sikh chief of Buriya, asking for permission to visit Hardwar. Zabita Khan expressed his ineffective authority by remarking: "Of what importance is the permit from me?"[4]

On the 7th November Rao Qutb-ud-din intimated at Ghausgarh that in company of Mansukh Rae he visited Rae Singh, and settled terms about the payment of *rākhi*, and Rae Singh being satisfied marched to Hardwar.

On the 11th November Badal Beg Khan's petition from Panipat

[1]Khair-ud-din, II, 68.

[2]On the 30th October news arrived at Delhi that it rained at Lahore and wheat was sold there 15 seers to the rupee. British Museum, *Akhbarat*, Or. 25021, folio 42a.

[3]On 5 November Zabita Khan sent Mardan Khan to buy horses from the Sikh country, and wrote letters to various Sikh sardars to help him.

[4]British Museum, *Persian Akhbarat*, Or. 25021, 57b.

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announced that Bhanga Singh and Bhag Singh, the Sikh chiefs, were stationed at Panipat. Dulha Singh also had arrived at the head of 1,000 horse. He and the residents of the town were greatly oppressed. Nawab Faizullah Khan from Rampur wrote that he sent friendly letters to the Sikh chiefs through Kesri Singh, *Jamadar* of the Sikhs, stationed on the Ganga.

On the 17th November Shaikh Mahmud, the *vakil* of the Sikhs, waited upon Mahadji Sindhia through Mirza Rahim Beg, and presented on behalf of his masters a Lahori gun and delivered a number of letters.

James Browne was informed by Karam Singh through his son Kalyan Singh that the Sikhs were invading Delhi and the Doab, but out of regard for the British Government they had given up the idea of crossing the Ganga into the territory of their ally the Nawab of Oudh. Browne in a letter dated camp near Shergarh, 17th November, 1783, communicated this news to Warren Hastings: "By the two papers which I this day have sent to Major Davy you will perceive the very formidable aspect of the approaching invasion of the Sicks. Their objects appear to be no less than the conquest of all the country possessed by the Mussalmans, and the friendly style of their letters to me as the English minister in this part of the country seems calculated to secure our neutrality."

On the 19th November some Sikhs visited Mirza Zain-ul-Abidin Khan. The Mirza took all of them in his service. Ram Singh, one of the Sikh chiefs, also met him with 100 horse. The Mirza held conversation with him in private, fixed his encampment near his own, and offered him Rs. 100 for a feast.

On the 20th November the Emperor asked Majd-ud-daulah to punish Zain-ul-Abidin Khan as he was in league with the Sikhs.

Shortly afterwards the Emperor directed Afrasiyab Khan, the regent and commander-in-chief, and Najaf Quli Khan, who had been created second Mir Bakhshi (on the 5th November), in the company of Prince Sulaiman Shikoh to undertake an expedition against the Sikhs and Zain-ul-Abidin Khan. They marched as far north-east as the village of Mudbaral, 13 kms from Meerut, punishing the rebellious villages on the way. Zain-ul-Abidin advanced from Baghpat to fight against the imperial forces. Afrasiyab tried to conciliate Zain-ul-Abidin. He deputed the Diwan of Jan Ali Khan, on behalf of Khadijah Begam, the renowned sister of the late Najaf Khan, then in camp with him. The Diwan succeeded in

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prevailing upon Zain-ul-Abidin to come to a meeting with Afrasiyab Khan under the protection of the forces of neutral Begam Samru on the 23rd December. At the conference Khadijah Begam and Najaf Quli were also present. Zain-ul-Abidin visited Khadijah Begam in her tent where Afrasiyab presented him a *khilat*, a sword, a horse and an elephant. Zain-ul-Abidin was next presented to the Prince, to whom the former complained about his *jagir* of eleven *mahal*. Afrasiyab stated that the territory in question was a part of the crownlands, and the decision of the problem was left to the Emperor. The regent held out hopes of a favourable consideration, otherwise he promised him another *jagir* to the value of twenty-four thousand rupees. It was agreed that the three generals—Afrasiyab, Najaf Quli and Zain-ul-Abidin—should work in concert against Gulab Gujar of Parichatgarh, Chatra Jat and the Sikhs. Afterwards all of them halted at Suraj Kund in Meerut.

Here Afrasiyab invited Zabita Khan to meet him. Zabita arrived at Meerut on the 15th January, 1784. There was an exchange of gifts, robes, horses and elephants. He was presented to the Prince. Afrasiyab ultimately prevailed upon Zabita Khan to keep the Sikhs out of the Doāb and prevent them from raiding the Delhi district. Zabita then left for Ghausgarh, and all others returned to Delhi on the 28th January.[1]

At this time the Sikh disturbances had assumed such an alarming shape as to stop the Kabul fruits to come to Delhi. A Maratha agent at Delhi wrote to Nana: "About twenty-five pears and a basket of Kabul grapes arrived here. No second consignment of fruit has yet come. You sent for the Kabul fruit; but owing to the Sikh disturbances no fruit is available. The old fruit too could be secured with much difficulty. It was not of good quality. Pears were small; while no apples could be had. If fresh fruit had arrived I would have certainly sent it to you."[2]

Siyar-ul-Mutakhirin has an interesting note about the Kabul fruits imported into India at this time:

"Pears, apples, quinces, and admirable pomegranates, come from thence [Kabul] to the interior parts of India, but especially grapes

[1]ibid, 39a, 42a, 43b, 45b, 46a, 47b, 54b, 57a-b, 60a, 62b, 65b, 66a, 67a, 68b, 79b, 82a, 85a; 88a; *Dilliyethil*, I, 98, 124; *N.A.I.*, Foreign Department, 41A, no. 45.

[2]*Dilliyethil*, 1, 99.

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of two inches in length; and exceedingly luscious. All that comes overland, over a tract four or five hundred leagues to Azimabad; but then it amounts to such a price, that a single grape sells at Lucknow for a penny English, pears, apples and pomegranates for half a crown the couple. From Lucknow they are sent to Calcutta, in presents, by the post."[1]

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[1]Seir, III, 60, fn.

CHAPTER 13

The British Government Alarmed, 1784

The Sikh raid in the Doab, January-February, 1784

The Delhi Government was, entertaining false hopes with regard to Zabita Khan, as neither he nor Zain-ul-Abidin was capable of checking the Sikh aggression. Early in January, 1784, a body of 20,000 Sikh cavalry gathered at Buriya on the Jamuna. This frightened the British commanding officer at Bareilly, who in a letter of the 8th January aroused the apprehension of the Governor-General. He wrote that the Sikh intentions appeared to be to attempt an entrance into Rohilkhand between the *ghats* of Daranagar [a small town on the left bank of the Ganga 10 kms south of Bijnor] and Hardwar on the Ganga. The Governor-General's opinion was that the detachments at Bareilly and Fatahgarh were fully sufficient to repel their attack even if they succeeded in entering any part of Oudh. As a precautionary measure he provided relief to the second and third brigades which passed each other at Allahabad.[1]

Shortly afterwards a body of 30,000 Sikh horse and foot crossed the Jamuna and encamped at Sultanpur (13 kms north of Saharanpur). Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and Karam Singh were their leaders. On the 30th January, 1784, they moved to Sarsawa (10 kms south-west). Zabita Khan despatched Qutbi Ranghar and Nahar Singh Gujar at the head of a battalion and five pieces of cannon. They halted at Pikhani (6 kms from Saharanpur and 5 kms from the Sikh camp). Zabita Khan was at Ghausgarh. The *vakils* of Zabita Khan were in attendance upon the Sikhs who demanded a tribute of Rs. 50,000 as the price of their withdrawal. On the

[1]*N.A.I.*, Secret Letters to Court, 111, 130, paragraphs 25-27; Forrest *Selections*, 111, dated January, 20, 1784.

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4th February the Sikhs lay encamped between Shikarpur (6 kms north of Budhana) and Nirpura (8 kms south-west of Budhana). The Sikhs transferred their camp to Naula, slaughtered the inhabitants of the place, plundered their effects, and cut down the crops of the neighbourhood to feed their horses. By the end of February the Sikhs advanced to Sardhana, the seat of Begam Samru's government and then to Barnawa (24 kms west).

At this news the Delhi Court was greatly perturbed. Abdul Ahad Khan wrote to Zafaryab Khan[1] (stepson of Begam Samru) who was encamped at Serai Rohilla to stay there, and not to march to Sardhana. He appointed two companies of the Najib Battalions with two pieces of cannon to guard the Kashmiri Gate of the city.[2]

Browne's anxiety aroused

The presence of the Sikhs in the Doab created uneasiness in the mind of Major James Browne who had aimed at seizing the imperial capital for the British. He addressed a letter to the Governor-General on the 5th February, 1784, in which he stated that "the great army of the Sicks having entered Zabeta Khan's country which is just from where they may seize on the capital and plunder all the royal land in the space of a few days" was assuming a threatening attitude.

In a letter of the 13th February Browne wrote that Karam Singh, the leader of the Sikh expedition, again sent his son Kalyan Singh with a letter to him. Browne administered to him a gentle rebuke for this invasion: "I asked him what were the wishes and expectations of the Sick *sardars* that they had already in the course of a few years made themselves masters of a large and valuable country in the possession of which no one annoys them; but that their present expedition seemed to indicate that they are yet unsatisfied and mean to render themselves a terror and a nuisance to their

[1]Samru had been married to another Muslim woman by whom he had a son who got from Emperor Shah Alam II, the title of Zafaryab Khan, at the request of Begam Samru, his step-mother. He was a man of weak intellect, and possessed no capacity for leadership (*Sleeman*, 378).

[2]*Selections from the Calcutta Gazette*, I, 10-11, 13.
On February 24, 1784, prices of certain articles per rupee were recorded in Delhi as follows: Wheat 10 seers, rice 11 seers, makai 11.5 seers, mash 20 seers, gram 11 seers, moth 10 seers, ghi 3.25 seers, oil 5.5 seers, sugar 6 seers, molasses 8 seers (ibid, 13).

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neighbours without any provocation on their part; that such a conduct is impolitic and only leads to provoke a general union of such powers as are fully adequate to chastize unbridled insolence and unprovoked invasion, that by the newspapers I perceived the Sick *sardars* talked of laying waste the country of the Vizier as if their doing so were an act entirely at their own command and in which no one could molest them; but that I would assure them that the English Government would resent an attack on Rohilkhand in the same degree as an attack on Bengal." To this speech Kalyan Singh gave a brief reply that Karam Singh out of regard for his friendship with Browne had persuaded the other Sikh *sardars*, though with great difficulty, not to cross the Ganga into the territory of the Nawab of Oudh, an ally of the British.[1]

Browne's scheme for the capture of Delhi

Browne now decided to put his plans into execution; but he was to be disappointed to see them frustrated. The Emperor tried to check the Sikh aggressions, but to no purpose. On the 10th February, 1784, he again appointed Afrasiyab along with Prince Sulaiman Shikoh to march against the Sikhs. Afrasiyab, being afraid of the Sikhs, wanted to avoid the real issue. He wished James Browne to leave for Lucknow to bring back Prince Jawan[2] Bakht who had escaped from Delhi on the 14th April, 1784. He did not like Browne's presence in Delhi. Then he wished to go to Agra with the Emperor to collect tribute and to crush Hamdani.

Abdul Ahad on the other hand was cleverly maintaining friendly

[1]*N.A.I.*, Foreign Department Letters to and from Major Browne and Warren Hastings, 41A, no. 45; Secret Proceedings, 11 May, 1784, pp. 1096-1100.

[2]Shah Alam II had several sons. The eldest was Mirza Jawan Bakht Jahandar Shah. He was a rebel against his father, and lived mostly at Lucknow. He died at Banaras on June 1, 1788. The second son Abul Amar Muirz-ud-din Akbar Shah (1760-1837) became king after Shah Alam. Nothing is known about the third son Mirza Jahangir. The fourth Abul Muzaffar Siraj-ud-din Bahadur Shah (1775-1862) was the last Mughal Emperor, who was dethroned in 1857, and died in Rangoon as a British prisoner. Mirza Farkhunda Bakht died in 1782. Mirza Ahsan Bakht spent some time in Afghanistan and led a dissolute life at Multan and other places. Mirza Muhammad Sulaiman Shikoh died at Agra on February 24, 1838 and was buried in the Mausoleum of Akbar at Sikandra near Agra. No information is available about Yazdan Bakht. *Marathi Riyasat*, 47; *Selections from Calcutta Gazette*, 1, 257-8; *C.P.C.*, VIII, p. 251, fn. 1).

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relations both with the British and the Sikhs. It was expected that through his efforts the Emperor would come to terms with both parties.

James Browne had his own designs. He wanted to win over the Sikhs to the side of the British, and for this purpose he despatched a Panjabi Khatri with twenty messengers to Jai Singh Kanhiya. He invited him to march with a strong army, and to conquer the remnant of the Mughal Empire in collusion with the English. He suggested that out of the conquered territory three-eighths would go to the Sikhs and five-eighths to the English. This was the report sent by the Maratha agent at Delhi, stating that Browne aimed at seizing the imperial capital.[1]

This move seems to be independent of any instructions from the Governor-General, as Warren Hastings appeared quite opposed to the Sikhs and to their alliance with the Emperor. He stressed the need of forming an alliance with the Emperor against the Sikhs. In a minute presented to his Council on the 22nd April, Warren Hastings stated:

"The frontiers of Shah Allum form a barrier betwixt the Seiks and the dominions of the Nabob Vizier. If a permanent alliance was established betwixt us and the king, an additional security should be derived from it, against the desultory invasions of that predatory Sect to which the Vizier's frontiers are from their situation exposed. I understand that negotiations have at different times been carried on betwixt His Majesty and the chiefs of the Seiks. If unfortunately he should ever be so ill advised, as to throw himself upon them and suffer them to gain an influence in the administration of his Government or, if ever they should acquire it by overpowering the forces employed by his ministers in his defences, the consequences might not only be fatal to himself but ultimately dangerous to the peace and tranquillity of these provinces, and it evidently behoves us to be watchful to improve every opportunity of guarding against the possibility of such an event. In the meantime I have the pleasure to inform you that there is no immediate prospect of any disturbances from that quarter, as the chiefs of the Seiks who were some time ago expected to move this way have now retired to their own country."[2]

[1] *Dilliyethil*, 1, 103.

[2] *N.A.I.*, Secret Proceedings, 11 May, 1784, pp. 1083-84; Forrest, *Selections*, 1772-85, III, 1088.

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The apprehension of the Maratha agent in Delhi

Hingane, the Maratha agent at Delhi, was frightened at the prospect of an alliance between the English and the Emperor. He wrote to Nana Fadnis to put pressure on Mahadji Sindhia to see that the Emperor would not make peace with the English and the Sikhs. The danger was that if either or both got control over the Emperor, the Marathas would lose their influence in northern India. Nana Fadnis concurred in this opinion, and asked Mahadji Sindhia to go to Delhi and manage its affairs. He also directed Hingane to "urge the Emperor not to come to terms with the Sikhs and the English. If these once set their foot into the *Padshahi*, the result would be serious."[1]

In response to Nana's instructions Mahadji made overtures to the Emperor to counteract the designs of the English at Delhi. On the 25th May, 1784, he asked for financial support from Poona stating that his own resources were inadequate for such an undertaking.[2]

Hingane's fears were not groundless, as Browne was already "intriguing hard against the pro-Maratha Party at court and forming a coalition of nobles in favour of an English alliance."[3] Afrasiyab, however, foiled the attempt of the English agent, sent him to Lucknow on the 3rd May, 1784, and on the 30th May[4] arrested Abdul Ahad and imprisoned him in the fort of Aligarh. Henceforward, the Emperor became a mere tool in the hands of Afrasiyab, and "Warren Hastings finally gave up his plan of setting up an English party in the Delhi Government, as he had no subservient great noble left there to serve his end."[5]

Afrasiyab Khan communicated this news to Warren Hastings in a letter written on the 1st June, 1784:

"The Governor-General is perhaps well acquainted with the disturbances created by the Sikhs. Nawab Majd-ud-daulah (Abdul Ahad Khan) always reposed confidence in them and in collusion with them he drained off the imperial treasury. The Nawab used

[1] *Dilliyethil*, 1, 105.

[2] Sardesai, 318.

[3] Sarkar, III, 269; Francklin, 115-16.

[4] The Emperor's letter of this date to the Governor-General of Bengal stated that Ashraf-ul-Umara "moved towards Patiala and Sirhind in order to chastice the Sikhs, but he was foiled" (*C.P.C.*, VI, 1122; *Selections from Calcutta Gazette*, I, 10.)

[5] *Dilliyethil*, I, 104-5; Sarkar, III, 271-2; *C.P.C.*, VI, 1134, 1159.

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to pay them under the pretence of reimbursing their dues and at the time of adjusting the accounts he showed the sum under His Majesty's expenses. The result was that the royal treasury always remained empty. Whenever His Majesty demanded money for his expenses the Nawab produced the accounts evenly balanced or with a balance due to the bankers. This unsatisfactory state of affairs so enraged His Majesty that on one occasion he charged the writer with misappropriation of the revenue. On 9 Rajab (29 May) the Nawab invited the writer to his house where the latter in the course of conversation introduced the affairs of the Sikh rebellion and His Majesty's financial distress. The Nawab then gave out his secret and the writer having spoken everything to His Majesty on the day following requested his orders. In accordance with the commands of His Majesty the Nawab's property was confiscated and he was put in confinement and the writer was appointed to the management of the royal affairs."[1]

Collection of blackmail by the Sikhs in the Doāb, June, 1784

The main body of the Sikhs had retired to their homes, leaving their agents behind to collect *rākhi*. On the 8th June, 1784, the *vakils* of Baghel Singh and Dulha Singh visited Nawab Zabita Khan at Ghausgarh. Each of them presented one Lahori bow and a silken coverlet and delivered letters from their masters. They reported that Baghel Singh was encamped at Buriya and Dulha Singh at Radaur.

On the 9th June the revenue sheets of Mehar Singh and Bhag Singh Sikh chiefs came from Lohari town. Mansukh Rae examined the accounts and Zabita Khan approved of them. A news-letter from Daranagar of the same date stated that Bhikhari sailor brought two of his boats to Garhi Bhogpur on this side of the Ganga a couple of days ago. It appeared that he cherished evil intentions as Mahan Singh Sikh chief and Chaudhri Khem Chand were staying there. The sailor interviewed them; and the three combined seemed bent upon mischief. Orders were immediately issued to Jafar Khan to appoint his Najib battalion and 100 infantry men at the *ghat*, and to watch carefully their movements. The same day's news-letter from Rampur explained that Sada Nand and others, agents of the Sikhs, had gone there for a calf of elephant, and that they had left with the calf the previous day.

[1] *C.P.C.*, VI, 1134.

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On the 10th June Nawab Zabita Khan received letters from Baghel Singh, Dulha Singh, Karam Singh Nirmala and Gurbakhsh Singh of Ambala. They stated that they were obedient to him, and had given up the idea of crossing the Jamuna without his permission. Gurbakhsh Singh and Karam Singh Nirmala complained that they had not received *doshalas* as had been granted to other Sikhs. Zabita Khan wrote in reply: "I regret for it; but you never visited my capital. I cannot do without you; and you can have as many *doshalas* and elephants as you please." The Nawab then said to Diwan Singh and Bhag Singh who were staying with him: "Please leave this place, as it is the cause of my disgrace. When you reach Buriya tell Rae Singh that out of regard for our old friendship he should not allow Baghel Singh to come to this side." The Sikh chiefs replied: "We will leave after gathering all our horsemen who are realizing *rakhi* from the country."[1]

On the 12th June, 1784, Nawab Sultan Khan as advised by Zabita Khan had an interview with Nawab Afzal Khan, and offered to him the post of the commander-in-chief of Zabita Khan's army. Afzal Khan expressed his willingness to assume the duties of that office on certain conditions. In the first place he wanted Diwan Mahtab Rae to be appointed the paymaster of the troops. In the second place he wished that authority should be given to him to fight against the Sikhs who were present in the country to collect *rākhi* in case of insubordination.

On the 13th June Diwan Singh and other Sikhs left Ghausgarh and encamped near Rampur and Chandkhera.

On the 14th June Nawab Afrasiyab Khan assured Karori Mal and others, the *vakils* of the Sikhs, of the strict observance of the terms of agreement, and dismissed them after granting *doshalas* and *goshwaras*.

The news-letter from Najibabad of the 20th June stated that Shams Khan *Jamadar* of the infantry stationed at the *ghat* of Bihta(?) on the Ganga wrote a letter to Naib Muhammad Jafar Khan. He said that 200 horse and 300 foot of the Gujars and Sikhs were lying encamped on the other side of the river near *ghat* Kallu Khan three kos distant. Forty men of theirs sailed across the river in the night. On learning this Rahim Khan *Jamadar* stationed

[1]Zabita Khan wanted to go on a tour to the district of Miranpur and enquired of astrologers about the time of departure. They declared that 12 June was the most propitious day. *Akhbarat*, 160b.

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on the opposite bank attacked them and captured two men, one Sikh and the other a Gujar. The name of the Sikh captive was Mansa Singh, and he was a dependant of Sardar Bhag Singh, who immediately engaged a Khatri resident of Najibabad to negotiate for his release. The Government of the Nawab of Oudh did not like to give even the slightest pretext to the Sikhs for a future inroad. The overtures were at once accepted, and Mansa Singh was set free on the receipt of some money by way of ransom.

On the 27th June Zabita Khan granted one *doshala* each to Badan Singh and Mahtab Singh, the *rākhi* collectors appointed by Tara Singh and Karam Singh Sikh chiefs.[1]

The Sikhs plunder the suburbs of Delhi, December, 1784

On the approach of the rainy season the Sikhs had retired to their country, and for about five months they remained busy at home. We hear of them again about the middle of December, 1784, when some straggling Sikhs appeared in the neighbourhood of Delhi at the instigation of Najaf Quli Khan and plundered several places. Mahadji Sindhia ordered Ambaji and Rao Raja of Machhari to punish them, and the Sikhs in consequence beat a retreat.[2]

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Plans of Warren Hastings against the Sikhs, December, 1784

About the same time Warren Hastings formed his own plans to check the Sikh aggression in the Doāb. He was of opinion that in his designs upon Delhi the Sikhs were the greatest obstacle in his way. He, therefore, wanted to check their growing influence. In a minute presented to his Council on the 14th December, 1784, he stated:

"I have already said that there is now no power which can be properly so called in that part of Hindustan which borders on the dominions of the Company and their ally the Nabob Vizier. But this affirmation, though strictly true with relation to the question of present danger, must be taken solely in that restrictive application of it. A new source of serious contemplation has arisen from a nearer quarter, namely, that of the Sikhs, a people who from a mean sect of religious schismatics have rapidly grown into the

[1] British Museum, *Persian Akhbarat*, Or. 25021, folios 148b, 152a-b, 155b, 160a-b, 163b, 166b, 167a-b, 182a, 189b, 193a. [No more newsletters are available for this year.)

[2] Khair-ud-din, II, 96.

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masters of a dominion extending from the most western branch of the Attock to the walls of Dehli. Its present state is too contemptible to be an object of apprehension to any force which could be opposed to it, but the King, who derives as much of his present weakness from their encroachments, as from the usurpations of his own servants, which have excited them. They are by their bodily frame and habits of life eminently suited to the military profession; but this propensity is qualified by a spirit of independence which is a great check to its exertion. Every village has its separate and distinct ruler acknowledging no control, but that of the people of his own immediate community, who in their turn yield him little more than nominal submission.

"For some years past the Sikhs quitting their predatory incursions have fixed themselves in the lands which submitted to them, appointing collectors of their revenues, and officers for their Government. No opposition was made to them. The only instance in which it was attempted was in the year 1779, when the Minister Mudjed-ul-Dowlah marched from Dehli with an army of 30,000 men to attack them, and without the sight of an enemy purchased an ignominous retreat. They obtained quiet possession of the *purgana* of Sheaumlee, one of the King's personal domains lying within 30 *coss* of Dehli; while I was at Lucknow, they carried their depredations to the very suburbs of Dehli, where two of their officers actually reside in a quarter called Subzee Mundee, which is chiefly occupied by shroffs and shopkeepers, for the double purpose of levying their *rauky* (which is the name given to that species of contribution) and of protecting the inhabitants from the marauders of their own nation.

"We are too apt to despise the danger which we have not experienced, and to conclude that what has not happened in the ordinary course of events never will happen. On such a presumption my conclusions may expose me to the ridicule of those who may deem them the mere effusions of a wild imagination. I am willing to submit to this consequence if the events which I have foreboded shall be prevented by reasonable means of opposition; but I trust to time, and that not distant, for verifying my prediction if this people is permitted to grow into maturity without interruption.

"I now proceed to shew the present means by which this interruption may be effected, and another point of some consequence attained with it.

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"I have mentioned in my report of the 1st instant that it was one part of the Prince's plan to offer his services to the King to be employed against the Sikhs. The battalions which the Nabob Vizier has allowed for his escort cannot attend him beyond the Nabob's own frontier. If he carries them further he must provide their pay and subsistence, as their place must of course in that case be supplied by other levies, for which there is no other provision than that which is allotted to his actual establishment. This condition is in effect an insuperable bar to their employment, nor would it be prudent to trust his fortune on the first trial of it to the rabble of his father's army, unpaid and accustomed to disregard command. If the station at Futtyghur must be continued the detachment cannot be better employed either in whole or part than on service with the Prince. It will more effectually keep the Sikhs at a distance, by advancing with such an influence to attack them, than by waiting within its own sphere of defence to repel them. I must here inform the Board that the Prince repeatedly and earnestly solicited me to endeavour to obtain their authority, for he knew the extent of my own, for an employment of the detachment. I discouraged the expectation but promised to communicate his requisition.

"I will confess that the apprehension of his return upon our protection, the desire of executing the arduous task which the Board were pleased to assign me, and a yet stronger impulse arising from the hope of blasting the growth of a generation whose strength might become fatal to our own, strongly pleaded in my mind for supporting his wishes. But to these I opposed the more urgent consideration of the Company's distresses, and their solemn call upon us to relieve them, and I had resolved to report to the Board the Prince's request, but at the same time to state my objections to it, which in my judgment outweighed the advantages that might arise from a compliance with it.

"I choose in this place to observe that the actual expense of the detachment is 1,88,705 current rupees per month, or 22,64,466 per annum, of which 81,030 current rupees per month or 9,72,360 per annum, are the extra expenses of the staff, field *batta*, and contingencies which belong to it as a detached corps, and which would cease with its reduction, besides that it would facilitate the reduction of the strength of the army.

"But if the expense is to be continued it may surely be better continued for some useful purpose than to keep up the parade of a

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great military corps designed merely to be inactive in its quarters.

"On this ground, therefore, and on the supposition promised, I revert to my original sentiments in favour of the Prince's plan, but as this will require some qualification in the execution of it, I will state my recommendation of it in the terms of a proposition, *viz.*, that if it shall be the resolution of the Board to continue the detachment now under the command of Colonel Sir John Cumming at Furruckabad, and if the Prince Mirza Jehandar Shah shall apply with the authority of the King and the concurrence of Mahadajee Sindia for the assistance of an English military force to act in conjunction with him to expel the Sikhs from the territories of which they have lately possessed themselves in the neighbourhood of Dehli, it may be granted, and such a portion of the said detachment allotted to that service as shall be hereafter judged adequate to it."[1]

Macpherson, the senior most member of the Governor-General's Council, held different views. In a minute presented on the 1st December, 1784, he stated:

"Should the Sikhs invade the Vizier's countries we must repel them, and the Shahzada with Sindia's support might be of use on the occasion. but until such invasion I am for my part averse to commence any hostilities against them though I believe they may become in time a formidable power."[2]

The plan of Warren Hastings to crush the Sikhs failed for various reasons. In the first place the Prince had neither ability nor the capacity to execute such a grand design. Warren Hastings could not spare his troops stationed on the Ganga, because in their absence to farther north the Sikhs might cut into their rear and attack Oudh; and Warren Hastings had not sufficient means at his disposal to check their progress. Another difficulty lay in securing the approval of Sindhia who ruled over the Ganga Doab for the passage of the English troops to Delhi. Above all the Emperor would never have consented to place his rebel son in command of an expedition against the Sikhs.

[1]Forrest, *Selections*, III, 1123-25; *N.A.I.*, Secret Proceedings, 14 December, 1784, pp. 537-44.

[2]Forrest, *Selections*, III, 1125.

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CHAPTER 14

Sindhia's Treaty with the Sikhs, May, 1785

Sindhia appointed Regent Plenipotentiary, December, 1784

At the time when Warren Hastings was planning to take the remnant of the Mughal Empire under British protection mainly through Prince Jawan Bakht, then living at Lucknow as a British pensioner, events of much greater importance were taking place at Delhi, to which the reader's attention is now directed.

Afrasiyab, the regent of the Mughal Empire, was murdered by Zain-ul-Abidin Khan on the 2nd November, 1784. Warren Hastings presented the following minute regarding the death of Afrasiyab Khan to his Council on the 14th December, 1784:

"I have, I believe, before stated the power of Afrasiab Cawn as in its wane and hastening to its end. On the 2nd ultimo he was, as the Board are already informed, assassinated by a soldier of his army in his own tent, instigated, as it is suspected, by a Zein-ul-Abdeen Cawn, the brother of Mirza Shuffee, who perished in like manner by the agency of Afrasiab Cawn, on whom this retribution has fallen with the strictest justice. The assassin was destroyed on the instant, and Zein-ul-Abdeen fled for refuge to Mahadajee Sindia who has caused him to be imprisoned, but his destiny is yet unknown."[1]

The news staggered Shah Alam II who had none else in his court to appoint in place of the deceased. Out of the four lieutenants of Najaf Khan two were dead, Hamdani was in open rebellion, while Najaf Quli was squandering his energies in the most shameless pursuit of sensual pleasures. The Emperor's most favourite courtier Abdul Ahad Khan was a prisoner in Aligarh fort.[2]

[1]Forrest, *Selections*, 1772-1785, III, 1129.

[2]He died in exile near Fatahpur Sikri on September 7, 1788.

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James Browne tried to seize the opportunity for establishing British influence at Delhi. He pressed the Emperor to accept British assistance on the conditions of appointing Abdul Ahad to the office of the regent, to expel the Marathas, and to rule over the Empire like the Nawab of Oudh under British protection. The Emperor had personal cognition of the British policy. Besides, he knew the fate of the Nawabs of Bengal under British control. He had also full knowledge of the incompetency and incapacity of his Kashmiri favourite. In consequence of these considerations Browne's proposals were summarily rejected.

Shah Alam II was aware that Mahadji Sindhia was the only man who could remain obedient to him, and who was capable of establishing peace and order in the kingdom. Mahadji had become very powerful by this time. Several Rajput princes were tributary to him. The fortress of Gwalior had been restored to him by the Rana of Gohad. One of his generals, Appa Khande Rao, was successfully reducing Bundelkhand to submission. He had employed in his service a French general, Benoit de Boigne, who had disciplined and trained Sindhia's army after the model of the West. For a few following years Mahadji Sindhia was "the greatest man in India." He, however, retained his humility and called himself the Peshwa's servant. On a subsequent occasion when he paid a visit to Poona, he insisted upon carrying the Peshwa's slippers in the full *durbar*, saying, "This was my father's occupation and it must also be mine."[1]

The Emperor met the Maratha chief at Khanua 13 kms southwest of Fatahpur Sikri and in a secret conference on the 17th November told him: "You must undertake the regency of my house and regulate my empire." Sindhia asked for time to consider over the matter; while the Emperor steadfastly continued urging him to accept the proposal. On the 1st December, 1784, in a public *durbar* Shah Alam at the suggestion of Sindhia appointed the Peshwa his deputy and commander-in-chief with the reservation that only Mahadji would perform the functions of these high offices as the Peshwa's agent. On the 4th December at another public *durbar* the Emperor bestowed the highest post of *Vakil-e-Mutlaq* [Regent Plenipotentiary] on Mahadji Sindhia. This office was so rarely filled that only three previous instances, under Akbar, Shah Jahan and

[1]Festing, 174.

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Bahadur Shah I, existed in the whole range of the Mughal rule in India.

The highest distinction received by Sindhia brought in its train the most hazardous and most difficult duties to be performed. He possessed not an inch of the imperial land with the exception of the ground occupied by his camp, and he had to fight to obtain the entire Mughal dominions. The Imperial capitals of Delhi and Agra and other important forts were in hostile hands. Many intrigues were afloat against him. The late Afrasiyab's Mir Bakhshi Diwan Naraindas and his unscrupulous ally Himmat Bahadur Gosain[1] were planning to bribe the Emperor to nominate Afrasiyab's three-year-old son as Mir Bakhshi. Major James Browne was desperately working to bring the Mughal Empire under British protection like the kingdom of Oudh. Najaf Quli was trying to create disturbances in the crownlands.

To crown it all there was no money in the treasury. Sindhia's own pecuniary position was unstable. He was in debt to the amount of eighty lakhs of rupees. His own army was costing him seven lakhs of rupees per mensem. The Mughal forces brought a fresh burden of three lakhs a month. The Emperor was to be provided with one lakh and thirty thousand rupees monthly. All this expenditure was to be borne by Sindhia in order to maintain himself in his new position.[2]

The Sikhs sack Chandausi, January-February, 1785

The most troublesome people whom Sindhia had to face were the Sikhs. In the beginning of 1785, a large horde of

[1]Himmat Bahadur Gosain's (1734-1804) real name was Anup Gir. The Gosains were religious mendicants. In Aurangzeb's time they took to the profession of arms, and some of them began to marry. The Gosains opened wrestling grounds where they developed their physique. His father Rajinder Gir took service in the army of Nawab Safdar Jang of Oudh. His two sons, Umrao Gir and Anup Gir, served in the Nawab's army, and both received the title of Raja from Shuja-ud-daulah. Umrao Gir married and had several sons; while Anup Gir preferred to remain single all his life. Both the brothers fought against the Marathas in the Third Battle of Panipat. They participated in the battle of Buxar, 1764. On Shuja-ud-daulah's death they were taken into imperial service by Najaf Khan. Shortly afterwards the Emperor conferred the title of Himmat Bahadur on Anup Gir. In 1883 he joined the English. He died in 1804. (*C.P.C.*, VII, 41, fn.; *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, XIV, 320; Beale, 160; *Marathi Riyasat*, 55-57; Sarkar, III, 313.)

[2]Sarkar, III, 291-96; Duff, III, 476-81.

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them numbering about 30,000 under the leadership of Baghel Singh, Gurdit Singh and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia crossed the Jamuna and swept over the upper Doāb with irresistible fury and ferocity. The Bārha Sayyid towns which lay right on their line of march suffered much. Zabita Khan to whom this territory belonged was unable to stem the tide, and "lay trembling within the ramparts of Ghosegurh." Miranpur (32 kms south-east of Muzaffarnagar) was particularly signalized for a victim of their wrath. They soon crossed over the Ganga into the country of Oudh.

On the 13th January, 1785, they razed to the ground the villages of Barsi and Mahmudpur, inhabited by the Sayyids. Then they decided to plunder Moradabad. On the 14th January as soon as they set out, a messenger arrived with the agreeable news that Chandausi lay unprotected. Banne Khan, the chief of the place, had retired for fear of the Sikhs to a distance of two days' journey in the village of Banawali. His deputies Chhattu Lal and Sobharam had also left the town and bankers and merchants were removing their property to places of safety. They were informed that Chandausi would bring them greater riches, as it was a famous market-place where 2,000 bankers and merchants had their business firms and where transactions of crores of rupees were carried on.[1] This was also pointed out that day being Friday the Musalmans would have gathered in Moradabad in a large number, and in overpowering them they must sustain some losses; while at Chandausi no risks were involved.

The Sikhs gave up marching upon Moradabad and turned towards Chandausi where they arrived at 9 o'clock in the morning. After a feeble resistance the guards were slain. They "rushed in and set fire to all the houses and markets and plundered all the property worth lakhs of rupees." After thoroughly devastating the

[1]"This was the grand salt mart of the province." (Hamilton, I, 440.) Regarding salt G.H. Barlow wrote the following account at Lucknow dated May 27, 1787: "The salt consumed in the province of Oudh is of three kinds, the Lahori, the Sambhari and Khari.

"The first and most esteemed is a species of rock salt brought from Lahore. But a small quantity, however, is imported owing to the heavy charges of carriage and duties to which it is subject between Lahore and Lucknow. The price it bears at the latter place is about 14 sicca Rupees per maund, and as few people can afford to purchase at this rate the consumption is confined to the houses of men of large property" (N.A.I., *Secret Proceedings*, June 6, 1787, p. 3246).

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town for two days they retired on the 15th January, and encamped for the night at Bhawanipur.

The advantage of the situation was taken by Gujars, another predatory tribe, who, in order to give themselves a similarity with the Sikhs, had added the word 'Singh' to their names, and some of their chiefs such as Nain Singh Gujar had grown long hair on head and beard. On the 15th January Bhim Singh, son of Gulab Singh Gujar, with a body of 500 horse crossed the Ganga into Oudh by the *ghat* of Qamar-ud-din Nagar and plundered the towns of Bachhraon, Salimpur and Garhi Sher Muhammad Khan. "No one," says the intelligencer, "has yet taken any steps to check this disturbance."[1]

On the 16th January Raja Jagan Nath, son-in-law of Maharaja Surat Singh, the Diwan of the Nawab of Oudh, arrived at Rasauli (45 kms south of Chandausi). He commanded a British subsidiary force consisting of both horse and foot and a park of artillery.[2] It was rumoured that he wanted to deliver an assault on the Sikhs the following morning. The Sikh chiefs held a council and on account of their being overloaded with booty decided to deposit their property on the other side of the Ganga in the night and to be ready in the morning to attack the English army. They hurried towards the river, but halted between Sambhal and Hasanpur (29 kms north-west of Sambhal), it being a dark night after 10 o'clock. In the morning of the 17th January, they crossed the Ganga and rested in their camp.

The English army marching along the left bank of the river reached opposite the Sikh camp and opened fire. The Sikhs replied by musketry fire. A short while before the arrival of the English army the Sikhs had sent some of their mules and camels on the opposite bank of the river to bring grass and fuel. They were captured by the English troops. During the same night a banker of Sambhal taken captive by the Sikhs, and whose offer for a ransom of Rs. 2,000 had been rejected, escaped with the assistance of some thieves.

On the 18th January the Sikhs wanted to attack the English army; but Gurdit Singh of Ladwa advised them to secure their

[1]Khair-uddin, II, 73.

[2]The Nawab in a letter to the Governor-General stated: 'Those battalions went under the command of a commandant belonging to me, and no English gentleman went there,' (N.A.I., *Secret Proceedings*, April 26, 1785).

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booty first. At this time they were encamped on the banks of the Ganga between Potha and Garhmuktesar. On the 19th January they packed up all their luggage and marched homeward. On the 22nd January they halted between Parichatgarh and Bisauli. Baghel Singh and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia decided for further advance.

By this time Karam Singh Nirmala, Rae Singh and Dulha Singh who were coming from home to join them had arrived at Ghausgarh. Karam Singh wrote to them to postpone marching till their arrival in their camp. Baghel Singh replied that they had made full preparations for the journey, and that Karam Singh could meet them at the next stage. This territory belonged to Raja Gulab Singh Gujar and Mehar Singh collected *rākhi* from him. Mehar Singh agreed to pay some money to Baghel Singh if he would march away, and the Sikhs immediately raised their camp.

The next halt was made at Miranpur, where on the 23rd January, the Sikh chiefs held a conference under a tree outside their camp, and received Mahadji Sindhia's agent who made certain proposals for peace. Baghel Singh suggested that they first must convey their booty home, and then proceed towards Bareilly at the head of a body from ten to fifteen thousand horse to gain more spoil.

The Sikhs moved along the right bank of the Ganga. On 27 January they lay encamped opposite the *ghat* of Sabalgarh Fort, a town in the district of Moradabad, situated to the east of the Ganga about 29 kms south of Hardwar. Jassa Singh, Gurdit Singh and Baghel Singh decided to cross the Ganga into Rohilkhand by the fords discovered by the Gujars. At this moment news arrived that Zabita Khan had died on 21 January. Another message stated that the English army under Raja Jagan Nath was advancing along the opposite bank of the river, and was ready to attack them. At night the Sikhs heard the report of the English guns, and in reply they also fired their camel artillery. Finding that the fords on the Ganga were strongly guarded the Sikhs on the 30th January marched towards Deoband. This day certain differences arose between Baghel Singh and Jassa Singh over the plunder of a *rākhi* village, and this disagreement continued to grow daily. Harji Ambaji another agent of Sindhia arrived in the Sikh camp to negotiate for peace on behalf of his master.

On the 1st February Karam Singh Nirmala, Rae Singh and Dulha Singh came from Ghausgarh and encamped 7 kms from the

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Sikh camp. Baghel Singh immediately went to see Karam Singh to condole with him on the death of his wife. Baghel Singh suggested that as 30,000 Sikhs were there, after sending their booty home they should cross the Ganga for further ravages. Karam Singh proposed that first his differences with Jassa Singh must be composed. After reconciliation they would leave their entire baggage in the charge of one chief, and the next course of action would be settled in a conference.

The Sikhs decided to march to Daryapur and cross the Ganga at the *ghat* of Sahasgarh. On the 4th February at the time of their march it began to rain. The journey was consequently put off. They advanced to Daryapur on the 5th February and plundered the village. A contingent of 3,000 horse was despatched to ravage a village on the opposite bank, but they could not find a ford. The English army also noticed them, and opened artillery fire on them. So they returned to their camp.

Husain Khan, the *vakil* of Zabita Khan's son Ghulam Qadir, waited on the Sikh chiefs, offering to pay them their usual *rākhi*, but asking them to withdraw from his territories immediately.

The Sikhs hesitated to attempt crossing the Ganga in the face of the English army which had effectively secured the ferries over the Ganga. Besides, two regiments from the Fatahgarh brigade had been sent to Anupshahar with Lieutenant-Colonel Knudson on the 1st February. On the 12th February in response to further requisition made by the Nawab two more regiments of sepoys with a company of artillery and a *rasala* of cavalry were despatched to various *ghats*.

The Nawab had to pay for these troops at the rate of Rs. 25,000 per mensem for each regiment of sepoys, Rs. 20,000 per mensem for each company of artillery; while the subsidy for the *rasala* of cavalry was to "be determined by the proportion which its actual expense bears to the subsidy agreed upon for a regiment of sepoys."[1]

"The Sicque forces assembled again," says *Forster*, I, 326, fn, "in the beginning of the year 1785, when they entered the province of Rohilcund, and having laid it waste, for the space of one hundred miles they returned unmolested." The marauding activities of the Sikhs were responsible to some extent for ruining the trade

[1]N.A.I., *Secret letters to Court*, 1786, V, pp. 336-43; *C.P.C.*, VII, 176.

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of Rohilkhand. "This predatory incursion," says *Hamilton*, I, 428, "gave the coup-de-grace to the trade of Rohilcund, as thenceforward no man would venture his property in a country equally destitute of protection, from arbitrary exactions within, and plundering adventurers from without."

The Sikhs, therefore, gave up the plan of invading Rohilkhand and marched back homeward. On reaching the Jamuna they planned to retain half of them in the Doāb and to send the other half by the Kutana Ghat (54 kms west of Meerut) to ravage the crownlands in Panipat, Sonepat and Delhi districts.[1]

Sindhia decides to pacify the Sikhs, January-February, 1785

The presence of the Sikhs in the Ganga Doāb greatly alarmed the Sindhia, who felt much worried over this problem. With a view to alleviate his difficulties he decided to pacify the Sikhs who were the most turbulent people in the country now placed under his control. They frequently invaded the crownlands under the pretence of realizing *rākhi*, and devastated the country. Besides, the safety of the imperial capital was a problem of the first and foremost importance. The Maratha agent in Delhi felt afraid that in case strong measures were not taken by the Marathas to protect the capital and the crownlands, they might fall into the hands of either the English or the Sikhs.

Mahadji despatched some agents one after the other to open peace parleys with the Sikh chiefs then present in the Doāb. He also invited some Sikh *vakils* in his camp early in January, 1785. Sindhia advised them to refrain from ravaging the Doāb and the crownlands, offering to grant them jagirs and to take a body of 5,000 Sikhs in his pay. The *vakils* were dismissed about the end of the month with valuable presents for their masters. Shortly afterwards he sent Pratab Singh, the Machhari Rajput Raja of Alwar, to prevail upon the Sikhs to agree to these terms, and he made a fervent appeal to Baghel Singh in the name of religion. Another agent Rozmal communicated to Baghel Singh to take advantage of the favourable situation.

[1]Ibid, *Secret Proceedings*, 1st March, 1785, Major Browne to Warren Hastings, dated 9th and 12th February, 1785; 26 April, 1785; from the Nawab Wazir of Oudh received on 21 April, 1785; *Bengal and Madras Papers*, III, 1757-1795, p. 18; *Foreign Department*, 41A, no. 45; *C.P.C.*, VII, 8, 14, 19, 20, 41, 44, 68, 149; Browne, 29; Sardesai, 365, 386, 406; Khair-ud-din, II, 103; *Calcutta Review*, LXI, 1875, pp. 40-41.

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On hearing of these negotiations James Anderson, the British Resident with Sindhia, wrote to Warren Hastings on the 1st February, 1785: "Sindhia's principal aim at present seems to be to form an alliance with the Seiks or rather to purchase if possible their forbearance from hostilities."[1]

Sindhia also won over the celebrated Begam Samru, a woman of masculine intrepidity and correct judgment, added several *parganahs* to her jagirs, some to the west of the Jamuna in Sonepat-Panipat district with a view to use her as a check upon the Sikhs.

A Marathi dispatch written in February, 1785, states that Bhim Sain Brahman, the *vakil* of the Sikhs, was in Delhi. The Sikhs did not pay his expenses. So he borrowed money from the residents of the cantonment, and then disappeared.[2]

When the Sikhs lay encamped at Kutana Ghat, they were invited by Najaf Quli to ravage the crownlands near Delhi. The Sikhs immediately responded to the call, and in a body of about 25,000 approached the imperial capital. They commenced realizing tribute from the people. Sada Shiv Dinkar, the Maratha agent at Delhi, writing to Nana Fadnis in February, 1785, stated: "The Emperor rules inside the city, while outside the Sikhs are supreme." The Gujars, a tribe of thieves, took advantage of this lawlessness. In the same letter Sada Shiv Dinkar wrote: "The Gujar *zamindars* of the neighbourhood of Delhi are committing dacoities and thefts in the city. The grass-cutters are allowed to return in safety on payment of a pice or two per load; otherwise they beat them on the way and block the road."

The Gujars are distributed widely all over the country between the Indus and the Ganga and from the Hazara mountains to the province of Gujarat. They particularly abound along the upper course of the Jamuna. They are essentially a pastoral tribe; but they took to thieving as a regular profession. The character of the Gujar of the Jamuna district can thus be estimated from the following proverbs: "A desert is better than a Gujar; whenever you see a Gujar, hit him." Again: "The dog, the monkey, and the Gujar change their minds at every step." And "When all other

[1] *Dilliyethil*, 1, 152; *C.P.C.*, VII, 42, 43; N.A.I., *Secret Proceedings*, 19 February, 1785, James Anderson to Warren Hastings, dated Sindhia's camp at Dig, 1st February, 1785 and 1st March, 1785, pp. 491-505.

[2] Sardesai, 351.

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castes are dead make friends with a Gujar." Further:

Kuttā billi do, Ranghar Gujar do,
Yeh chāron na hon, khule kiwāron so.

"The dog and the cat two, the Ranghar and the Gujar two; if it were not for these four, one might sleep with one's doors open."

But a Gujar was not without a certain amount of magnanimity of mind. He would seldom raise his hand against a woman. Thomas Twining, a civil servant of the East India Company, while travelling in the Ganga Doāb was overtaken by a body of about two hundred Gujars, well mounted and armed near Sikandra on the 9th December, 1794. It was after dusk and Twining was in a palanquin nearly asleep, when he was informed of their arrival. "Drawing my orange coloured shawl,"[1] says Twining "over my head, I was at once transformed into a *sirdar* of the country. This, however, alone would be no protection to us. At the same time, therefore, I ordered the red cloth on the top of the palanquin to be let down over the sides, and I told the captain of the guard to reply when challenged, *Padshaheeka haremkee bibee sahib*'—'A lady of the imperial seraglio.' The head of the cavalry reaching us, the commander called out in a surly uncivil tone, '*khe hy*?—'Who is there?' The captain of the guard replied, '*Padshaheeka haremkee bibee sahib*' and passed on. The chief of the banditti arriving opposite me, leaned forward on his horse and looked earnestly at me and then at the palanquin, giving me as he passed a cold salaam, which I returned, but without either of us saying anything. Many of his men addressed themselves in rather a taunting manner to mine, but I desired the latter to make no reply, and to leave the horsemen the greater part of the road, which indeed they were fully disposed to take. Disappointment, perhaps, was added to their natural roughness, for there was an insolence about them which I had never seen before in the natives of India."[1]

These robbers were perhaps not Gujars, but Muslims of Mewat, another tribe of plunderers. This would be clear from Twining's own account given on the same page:

"Fearful as it is, there is something noble in the name of a Mewatty, for courage commands a sentiment of respect even in unlawful actions when not, allied with cruelty. The Mewatty is always the bold and often the generous assailant. He is the Macheath of

[1]Ibbetson's *Glossary of Punjab Tribes and Castes*, II, 306-18; *Punjab Census* Report, 1881, 263; Twining, 268-69.

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the desert. Goujir, on the contrary, implies nothing but systematic craftiness and unsparing barbarity and communicates no impression but terror and dismay. He is the Schinderhannes of the plains of Hindustan."

Sindhia deputes Ingle and Malhar to gain over the Sikhs, February-March, 1785

These turbulences perturbed the mind of the Emperor. As some of the princes were at Salimgarh, he felt afraid lest some prince might be raised to the throne by Najaf Quli and the Sikhs. He sought urgent assistance from Mahadji. In response Sindhia appointed Ambaji Ingle *faujdar* of the districts situated to the north of Delhi with the Machhari Raja of Alwar as his assistant for the purpose of establishing Sindhia's rule in Delhi. Bapu Malhar in concert with Ingle was to restore order in the Doāb. Ingle commanded 5,000 cavalry and five infantry battalions of his own, 5,000 horse and four infantry battalions of Afrasiyab Khan, and 2,000 horse under Rao Raja of Machhari, the total number being about 20,000 men. Ingle marched straight to Delhi, and Bapu Malhar to Mathura. On crossing the Jamuna Malhar established Maratha rule over Khurja and other *mahal* belonging to Afrasiyab. From Khurja he sent a force of 2,000 horse to set up a Maratha post at Meerut. They were attacked by the Sikhs who looted their camp, and the Marathas fled back to Bapu Malhar. Bapu issued with a body of 5,000 horse, defeated the Sikhs, and established his post at Meerut. At Delhi Najaf Quli Khan was governing for Afrasiyab. On Ingle's arrival at the capital he quietly withdrew his men from administrative posts on the 11th February, and Ambaji secured peaceful possession of the city. Having put his own guards at the gates, he turned his attention to the Gujars who for some time past had been regularly looting the people. He was informed that about 1,000 Gujars were celebrating marriage in a village near Surajpur. Ingle at once advanced in that direction. The Gujars got ready to fight. In a fierce engagement nearly 400 Gujars were killed. He then laid waste some of their villages round the hillock of Kalkaji. After the sack of four or five Gujar villages and slaughter of the male population this predatory tribe became more peaceful.

Ingle proceeded to Barari Ghat to meet the Sikhs, who in a body of about 12,000 men under the leadership of nine chiefs including

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Rae Singh, Jai Singh, Bhag Singh and Bhanga Singh, lay encamped near Sonepat. Some Sikhs approached Ingle's camp and carried away a number of his camels. Ingle opened negotiations with them, and met the Sikh leaders on the bank of the Jamuna. He fixed his camp at Bakhtawarpur (21 kms north of Delhi), while the Sikhs were halting at Ganaur (40 kms farther north). He tried his level best to attach the Sikhs to Sindhia's interest, but to little effect.

Ingle instructed Bapu Malhar not to advance from Meerut against the Sikhs, as they were ready to attack him in a body of about 20,000 men. He asked him to come to the Jamuna bank near Loni and join him in a concerted attack on the Sikhs.

Ingle wrote to Sindhia: "The Sikhs are gathered in a large body; but they are disunited. Some of their chiefs command 5,000 horse each, some 1,000 and others 2,000. They are hostile to one another. The Sikhs of Lahore are not on good terms with the Sikhs of Panipat side. The latter numbering about 15,000 have offered to join us in fighting the Lahore Sikhs."

Mahadji replied: "Beware, they are all at one. They will deceive us at the time of battle, when they will go over to their brethren."

About this time Sindhia was busy in the siege of Agra fort which surrendered on the 27th March. Thereafter he wished to march to Delhi to compel the Sikhs to stop their marauding activities in the crownlands. But he considered the capture of the fortress of Aligarh of greater importance. He advanced to Mathura and opened negotiations with the keeper of the fort. He sent pressing instructions to Ingle not to slacken his efforts in settling peace terms with the Sikhs.[1]

James Anderson, Resident with Sindhia, wrote to the Governor-General, dated Agra, 3rd April, 1785:

"It is his (Sindhia's) intention to march from here with the King tomorrow towards Delhy. This resolution Scindia professes to have adopted in compliance with the wishes of the King, but it is probable that he has been in a great degree induced to it from the critical situation of his affairs at the capital under Ambajee owing to the opposition of the Seiks. All his efforts to attach them to his interest seemed to have had but little effect, and he now professes his intentions of exerting the whole of his force against them until he has compelled them to relinquish the tribute under the name of *Raakee*

[1]Parasnis, V, 46, (New) 373; *Dilliyethil*, I, 111, 127, 128, 153; Sardesai, 352, 354, 358, 373, 406; Khair-ud-din, II, 96; *Delhi Chronicle*, 367.

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which they have of late years imposed on the imperial territories."[1]

Ambaji prevails upon the Sikhs to make peace with Sindhia, 30th March, 1785

Ambaji continued his exertions for a peaceful settlement. He visited the Sikh camp, and was honoured with a dress. He invited two Sikh chiefs, Mohar Singh and Dulha Singh, to carry on talks on behalf of the Sikhs. They came to his camp and received the robes of honour. After a long discussion the following agreement was arrived at: "These two *Sardars* would arrange a peace with the Sikhs. The agreement between the Sikhs and the Imperial Government that has continued since Najaf Khan's ministry is that the Sikhs would levy *rākhi* (two annas in the rupee of revenue). This has continued till now. In future they are not to take *rākhi*. They must meet Mahadji Sindhia and serve wherever he orders them."

Mohar Singh and Dulha Singh went back to their own camp, and intimated what had passed on between them and Ambaji. The Sikhs agreed to form a provisional treaty with Ambaji to see what concessions they could get from Mahadji. These two Sikh chiefs thereupon returned to Ambaji's camp on the 27th March. Ambaji then visited the Sikh camp, and on the 30th March, 1785, concluded the following provisional treaty with them:

"Between this party (Raja Ambaji) and the chiefs Baghel Singh Bahadur, Karam Singh Bahadur, Dulcha Singh, Bhag Singh, Diwan Singh, Bhag Singh Dallewala, Goper (Mohar?) Singh, and the other chiefs of the *Khalsaji* (the Sikh Government) in friendship with the above mentioned chiefs, unity of interests and of friendship has been established on oath, through the intervention of Maha Rao Pratab Singh Bahadur. The friends and enemies, and the prosperity and adversity of each are mutual. Not the smallest degree of jealousy or difference subsists between us, and God is witness that there shall be no deviation.

"The Sikh Government from a consideration of the firm friendship that is established agree to forego their exactions of *rākhi* and this party from the share he now takes in their interests agrees to go himself in person or to depute some other to his master the Maharaja (Sindhia) in order to promote the settlement of the objects of the Sikh chiefs in regard to a provision for their expenses, etc., and whatever may be settled by the Maharaja shall be duly performed.

[1]N.A.I., *Secret Proceedings*, 19 April, 1785, pp. 1212-62.

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"Of whatever either on this side or that side of the Jamuna independent of the Royal Territories may be taken in concern with each other from the Hindus and Musalmans one-third shall be given to the Sikh chiefs together with the other points settled for them.

"Marching and halting and other points, great and small, shall be settled with the mutual consent of the Parties.

"The contracting parties shall unite their forces to repress any disturbances that may be excited by their enemies.

"Written on the 19th of Jamadi-ul-awwal of the 28th year of the Reign corresponding with the 30th day of March, 1785 AD."[1]

"This arrangement provided for the safety of the crownlands situated between Delhi and Panipat, and did not apply to the Ganga Doāb."[2]

The Sikh attempt to form an alliance with the English fails, April-May, 1785

It appears that the Sikhs were not serious to follow the terms of the treaty concluded with Ambaji. They sent their *vakil* to Sir John Cumming offering to form an alliance with the English. Cumming wrote to the Governor-General on the 11th April for instructions: "I learn with satisfaction that they express much alarm and jealousy at the progress of Sindhia's arms. They also express a strong inclination to enter into engagement with his Excellency and us. But though I am of opinion that a connection with them might be highly beneficial, and operate as a check on the Marathas, by finding them employment to the westward; yet I do not think myself authorized to encourage their proposals without instructions from you."[3]

Some other agents of the Sikhs waited upon Major William Palmer, the Resident at Lucknow, and expressed their desire to enter into an agreement with the British Government. In a letter of the 17th April, 1785, he wrote to the Governor-General: "I think it indispensable that you should be immediately informed of the

[1]*Dilliyethil*, I, 134, 157; Maheshwar, II, 90; Parasnis (New), 373; *C.P.C.*, VII, 212; N.A.I., *Secret Proceedings*, 26 April, 1785, James Anderson to the Governor-General, dated 11 April and 3 May, 1785.

[2]Sarkar, III, 309.

[3]N.A.I., *Secret Proceedings*, 26 April, 1785, John Cumming to the Governor-General, camp at Atrauli, 11 April, 1785.

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overtures made in all quarters from several of the leading chiefs of the Seiks for an alliance with our Government and that of the Vizier against the Mahrattas. There can be little reason to doubt of the sincerity of these advances as that people are much more exposed to the encroachments of the Mahrattas than we are, and have formerly experienced them in a very severe degree. You may therefore, I think, rely upon their assistance in any extremity and obtain it upon easy terms. For the present it is sufficient to encourage their expectations by general assurances and a delay sufficient for ascertaining the real designs of Scindia will be obtained by demanding formal and specific proposals. In the meantime I am of opinion that the Seiks will occupy a great portion of Scindia's time and attention, if they are persuaded that the English troops will not be brought to support him against their attacks, and it is not improbable that by this means the necessity of a connection with them may be obviated."[1]

The British Government did not wish that an alliance should exist between the Marathas and the Sikhs; but they were not prepared to enter into a direct agreement with the Sikhs. The Governor-General was in perfect agreement with the line of policy advocated by Palmer. Hence he approved of Palmer's suggestions and wrote to Cumming on the 19th April, 1785: "It is certainly not for the interest either the Company's or the Vizier's Government that the chiefs of the Seik tribes should form any friendly connections with the Mahrattas. On the contrary a disunion between them is much to be desired; and if any assurances to the Seiks of our determination not to interfere in such disputes could foment or add to them, such assurances ought to be conveyed."[2]

While Mohar Singh and Dulha Singh were negotiating terms of peace with Sindhia, some other Sikh *sardars* tried to form an alliance with the British Government in order to have a free hand in plundering the Doāb. Early in May Gurdit Singh and Man Singh wrote letters to Colonel Sir John Cumming. They wrongly stated that Sindhia wanted them in collaboration with the Marathas to plunder the country of the Nawab of Oudh and thereby to harass the English. They asserted that it was upon his advice that they had ravaged Chandausi and other places belonging to the Nawab.

[1]ibid, *Secret Proceedings*, 19 April, 1785, pp. 1212-62.

[2]ibid, no. 20. An intimation to the same effect was conveyed to James Anderson, Resident with Sindhia on 19 April, 1785. (ibid, no. 18.)

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The Sikh chiefs made a false accusation against Mahadji Sindhia. Even Sir James Anderson, Resident at Sindhia's court, did not believe in this charge. In a letter to Warren Hastings, dated the 10th February, 1785, he stated: "Sindhia disavowed it in the strongest terms, and immediately entered into an explanation of all that had passed between him and the Seik *Vakeels*, the substance of which was that he had offered to take 5,000 of their horse into his pay and to suffer them to collect their customary *Raakee* provided that they desisted from any further incursions, and that he had sent presents by them to five of their principal chiefs: this he solemnly declared to be the whole of what had passed; and I believe it to be true; because I have received the same accounts of it from other channels in which I place reliance."[1]

The Sikh chiefs submitted that if the English Government were desirous of their friendship, they were prepared to come to an agreement with it. Another letter to the same effect was addressed to the Colonel by Bhanga Singh, Gurbakhsh Singh and Jodh Singh.[2] The Governor-General indicated his policy: "The Governor-General is informed by Major Palmer that overtures have been made in all quarters from several of the leading chiefs of the Seiks for an alliance with the Company and the Vizier against the Mahrattas. We shall not discourage these advances, though we shall not meet them but by general assurances until the real designs of Mahadjee Sindhia shall be ascertained to have an hostile tendency."

In pursuance of this policy Cumming wrote to the Sikhs in reply on the 13th May: "This shall be the proof of your friendship that you should make no disturbance in the country of the Nawab Vizier and no quarrel with the English, and thus to eternity friendship and union will remain between us.[2] The negotiations consequently fell through, and no treaty was concluded between the Sikhs and the British Government.[3]

Sindhia concludes a treaty with the Sikhs, 9th May, 1785

Having formed a provisional alliance with the Sikhs, Ambajil eft his camp on the Jamuna in the company of the two Sikh chiefs,

[1]ibid, *Secret Proceedings*, March 1, 1785, pp. 492-93.
[2]ibid, 7 June, 1785, pp. 1683-91, nos. 1, 2; *C.P.C.*, VII, 227, 242, 243.
[3]*C.P.C.*, VII, 227, 228, 242, 243, 244; Auber's *Rise and Progress of the British Power in India*, II, 26; *Calcutta Review*, LXI, 1875, p. 40; N.A.I., *Secret Proceedings*, 19 April, 1785, no. 18; *P.R.C.*, 1, 14-15.

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Mohar Singh and Dulha Singh, and by travelling post-haste he reached Sindhia's camp at Mathura in the evening of the 10th April. On the following day Mohar Singh and Dulha Singh were introduced by Ambaji to Sindhia, and negotiations began. The peace-parleys continued for a month, when Mahadji Sindhia concluded the following treaty with them on behalf of the Sikh chiefs on the 9th May, 1785:

"The Chiefs of the Khalsa with a force of 5,000 horse being united in connection with the Sarcar and the victorious army, shall receive allowances and a *jagir* of 10 *lacs* of rupees according to the following particulars:

"Of this *jageer* 7½ *lacs* of rupees are in the neighbourhood of Karnal and 2½ lacs[1] from the country of the Sarcar, and they shall attend in union, and besides their allowances and *jageer* the Sarcar shall have authority over the whole dependency of Karnal and the country without interference, and if in the authority of the dependencies the authority (? income) should be less than this engagement, something shall instead thereof be granted from the Sarcar. In case the army of the said Chiefs should be summoned to the Sarcar before they have authority and possession in the *jageer*, half of a rupee shall be paid from the Sarcar for each horseman after they be recorded, and after possession and full authority no claim of pay for the sepoys shall be attended to for supporting themselves on the *jageer*. And considering their union to be finer than a hair, let them employ themselves in the obedience to orders, and let them prevent their people from taking the *Rākhi* in the circuit of the Royal Palace and in the possessions of the Sarcar, and by no means let any disagreement remain in future. I am in friendship with the Chiefs of the English Company and with the Nawab Vizier; let there never be any injury offered to their country. In this engagement God is between us, so no deviation shall happen—*Written on the 29th Jamadi-ul-Sani at Tilrajee.*"

Mohar Singh and Dulha Singh were then granted robes of honour, necklaces of pearls and horses in addition to Rs. 5,000 as their travelling expenses.

The Marathas, however, suspected the sincerity of the Sikhs in keeping the terms of the treaty. A Marathi despatch stated: "But the Sikhs are faithless [*beimān*]. Having stayed in the camp for two

[1]Four parganahs of Gohana, Kharkhauda, Tosham and Maham, worth 2.5 lakhs of rupees were granted on this occasion. (*Dilliyethil*, 1, 135.)

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months they have closely studied all about our troops."[1]

The duplicity of the Sikhs

This was not altogether a wrong impression. In the evening of the same day when the treaty was concluded, an agent of Dulha Singh visited the clerk of James Anderson, Resident at the Court of Sindhia, in the disguise of a cloth merchant. Having displayed his drapery he told the *Munshi* that he had also some jewellery to sell, and on account of its preciousness it could only be shown in private. When the *Munshi* retired to examine the wonderful gems, the Sikh agent disclosed his identity and purpose. He stated that he had been deputed by Dulha Singh to win the friendship of the English against the Marathas.[2] He told him that "his master as well as the other Seik chiefs were extremely desirous of establishing a friendship with the English. He complained bitterly of the deceit which had been practised upon them by Sindia... Dooljah Sing he said being at present in the power of Sindia, had from necessity yielded to these terms, but he declared that as they had discovered clearly the insidious scope of Sindia's designs they were determined not to adhere to the Treaty."

Anderson instructed his clerk to inform the Sikh agent that "the English and Sindhia are certainly connected in the firmest friendship, but that the Seik Chiefs may rest perfectly assured that it is not our intention to take any part with him against them; that in regard to an intercourse of friendship by letters between them and our Government I think it extremely proper and should be happy to be the channel of conducting it."[3]

Another Sikh *vakil* named Sewa Singh waited upon Colonel Sir John Cumming with letters from Gurdit Singh, Baghel Singh, Man Singh and others, and expressed his apprehensions at Sindhia's ambitious designs in which he declared the British Government was also a party. Cumming tried to remove this misunderstanding: "I,

[1]ibid.

[2]N. A. I., *Secret Proceedings*, 26 April, 1785, John Cumming to the Governor-General, dated at Atrauli, 11 April, 1785, 26 May, 1785; James Anderson to the Governor-General, dated at Mathura, 10 May, 1785.

[3]N.A.I., *Secret Proceedings*, 3 May, 1785, pp. 1373-85; 26 May, 1785; 7 June 1785; James Anderson's, letters to John Macpherson, dated at Camp Mathura, 20 April, 10 and 16 May, 1785, also pp. 1683-91; *P.R.C.*, I, 15A, Sir John Cumming to John Macpherson, dated 14 May, 1785.

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therefore, told the Seik *vakeel* that though our Government is resolved to adhere to the treaty with the Mahrattas, yet we are under no engagements to assist in promoting their ambitious views; and that under no circumstances would we aid them against the Seiks, provided the latter made no incursions into our ally the Vizier's country."

The British authorities, it would be clear, were not prepared to offend Sindhia, and in a way they were satisfied with the treaty as James Anderson stated: "In other respects I expressed myself much pleased with this treaty since it effectually secured the Vizier's Dominions against any future inroads from the Seiks, seeing that in the present state of their connection, no incursion could henceforth be made without his knowledge and consent."[1]

About this treaty James Browne the English Minister at Delhi who was bitterly hostile to Maratha interests at the imperial court remarked:

"In 1785, Mahajee Scindea (having before seized on the Shah's person, and the entire administration of his affairs) entered into an alliance with the leaders of the Sicks, between the Sutledge and the Jamuna, both offensive and defensive: One of the articles of which treaty expressly says as follows: 'Besides the royal lands, whatever shall be acquired by either party (Scindea: the Sicks) with mutual consent, on either side of the Jamuna, from Hindoos or Mussulmans, one-third thereof, shall belong to the Khalsa Gee—(the Sick State).' This clearly points at the Vizier's country.

"As soon as this treaty was framed, I obtained a copy of it, which I transmitted to Mr. Macpherson, then acting as Governor-General, April the 9th,—What use he made of the information, I cannot tell: but surely a confederacy of two such formidable powers as the Sicks and Marhattas, close to the Vizier's frontier, must afford matter for very serious apprehension, to every person who is anxious for the safety of the Company's possessions in India: which are so intimately connected with those of the Vizier, that prosperity or calamity must be in common to them both."[2]

[1]Parasnis (new), 381; Rajwade, XII, 41; *Dilliyethil*, 1, 108, 134, 135, 137; Sardesai. 409; *C.P.C.*, VII, 245; N.A.I., *Secret Proceedings*, 7 June, 1785, pp. 1683-91, Anderson's letter, dated 16 May, 1785.

[2]James Browne, *India Tracts*, II, 29.

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No peaceful means, however, could induce the Sikhs to remain faithful to the treaty agreed to by them. The Sikhs understood and respected only one thing—superior physical force. Mahadji Sindhia, on the other hand, believed in a policy of persuasion and conciliation. He was therefore bound to fail in his dealings with the Sikhs, as would be studied in the following chapter.

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CHAPTER 15

The Sikh-Maratha Alliance Breaks Off, 1785-1788

Hostilities begin between the Sikhs and the Marathas, June-December, 1785

No sooner was the treaty signed than misgivings arose between them. The Sikhs did not wish to abide by the treaty. Only a day later the treaty was signed, James Anderson wrote to the Governor-General that there was "little probability of a sincere union taking place between the Mahrattas and the Seiks." At this prospect he expressed his opinion that "it is perhaps on the whole more favourable to the interests of the Company that they should continue to be disunited."[1]

Sir John Cumming wrote to the Governor-General on the 14th May, 1785, that the *vakils* of the Sikhs came to enquire of him whether the English would help the Sindhia in fighting against them. He liked the suspicion arising in their minds against the Marathas; but assured them that the British Government wished to remain on friendly terms with the Sikhs if the latter would not make a predatory excursion into Oudh.[2]

On the 16th May Anderson wrote again: "It appears extremely probable that the Seiks have themselves no serious intentions of adhering to this treaty and there is reason to suspect that Sindia entertains some apprehensions on this score."

Mahadji therefore appointed several officers to various places with instructions to keep a sharp watch on the Sikhs. Dhar Rao Sindhia, grandson of Sabaji Sindhia, with 8,000 horse and 10,000 foot was appointed *subahdar* of a vast territory extending from

[1]N.A.I., *Secret Proceedings*, 26 May, 1785, James Anderson to John Macpherson, dated at Mathura, 10 May, 1785.

[2]ibid, 7 June, 1785, pp. 1683-91.

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Mathura and Aligarh to Karnal and Saharanpur. Shyam Rao Bakhshi was to take charge of the Panipat region. The districts of Saharanpur and Muzaffarnagar were given to Ram Ratan, Ganeshi Lal, and Laljimal, the Rangde collectors; while Haibat Rao Phalke was given charge of the Meerut district. He was provided with 2,000 horse, 5,000 foot and a park of artillery.

Early in June the Sikhs entered the Doāb, and began to collect *rākhi* at the rate of two annas in the rupee of revenue. At this a Marathi despatch of the 14th June, 1785, remarked: "The country is large, and so its political affairs are also great. No good government has therefore been established as yet."

Dhar Rao proceeded to Meerut to expel the Sikhs; but he did not achieve much success. A Marathi despatch stated this fact thus: "The reason for this is that there is a majority of non-Marathas in the army of Dhar Rao. The Maratha horsemen are smaller in number. It will be a good day when the Sikhs are defeated and our control is established there."[1]

Shyam Rao Bakhshi advanced towards Panipat. The *vakils* of Raja Gajpat Singh, Raja Sahib Singh of Patiala, Baghel Singh and other Sikh chiefs attended the Bakhshi, and commenced parleys regarding their revenues. But nothing came out of them. A Marathi letter written in June states: "As yet not even four rupees have been realized. They are studying our resources. The rains have begun."[2]

Early in July Dhar Rao Sindhia marched at the head of 10,000 troops to overawe the Sikhs into submission. On the way he was joined by Raja Gajpat Singh with whose active assistance he realized some tribute from the local Sikh chiefs. At Kunjpura Baghel Singh and Karam Singh met him. Dhar Rao demanded money from Ghulam Qadir, the son of Zabita Khan, who had died on the 21st January, 1785. Ghulam Qadir was in the Maratha camp. He was a young man of great determination, unmanageable temper, and turbulent and cruel disposition. Once he had revolted against his father and taken shelter with Sindhia. He succeeded to his family estates without paying the customary succession duties. He captured the lands of all his relatives, and imprisoned his mother and paternal uncle Afzal Khan who escaped to take refuge with

[1] *Dilliyethil*, 1, 137.
[2] ibid, 136.

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Sindhia. He recovered the territories belonging to his grandfather, Naiib-ud-daulah including Dehra Dun. He strongly fortified the fortress of Ghausgarh. Sindhia bestowed his favours upon him with a view to secure his help against the Sikhs.

The Rohilla chief immediately paid one lakh of rupees out of the tribute due from him. About 1,500 Sikhs who were still carrying on their depredations in the Meerut district were greatly alarmed at finding the Maratha general lying encamped in their rear, and they soon crossed back into their territory. Dhar Rao was satisfied with the withdrawal of the Sikhs from the Doāb, and he retired to Delhi.[1]

In August Gurdit Singh again entered the Doāb with about 1,000 horse and plundered the Meerut district, but he returned shortly afterwards. After the rains Sindhia decided to move towards Delhi to try to settle the problem of the Sikhs. A despatch states: "He does not seem to have been successful in attaching any party of the Seiks to his interest; but considering the irreconcilable animosities with which they are actuated towards each other he has no great reason to dread their making any serious efforts against him."[2] In November, 1785, Mahadji approached towards the imperial capital to protect it from the Sikhs, as "their troops are now actually opposed to his."[3]

A Marathi despatch written about the end of 1785 describes the condition of India thus: "Hindustan is without a Kshatriya. There are the Sikhs, but they are torn by internal dissensions, and none would obey another. The Nawab Wazir is dependent upon the English. The position of the English is also deteriorating. The successor of Hastings is following a different course from him. The Emperor has become a mere pensioner for Rs. 1,30,000 a month. If he gets that money he does not care for a single village or a *bigha* of land. The entire burden of administering northern India is on Mahadji Sindhia. He is doing his best; but he lacks able men."[4]

A Marathi despatch from Delhi states that a quarrel arose between Raja Sahib Singh and his Bakhshi over the question of roll-call of the army. The Bakhshi slapped Sahib Singh and the [Raja 10 years old] went weeping to his mother. The Rani put the

[1]Parasnis, I, 98; Sardesai, 411, 423.
[2]N.A.I., *Secret Proceedings*, 11 October, 1785.
[3]*P.R.C.*, I. 19.
[4]*Dilliyethil*, I, 181, 187; Rajwade, XII, 39.

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Bakhshi under arrest. The Bakhshi's relatives held four large forts which they handed over to Baghel Singh and Rae Singh. The Raja invited Jai Singh Kanhiya, his sister's uncle-in-law, to his assistance. The Bakhshi's relatives thereupon invited Khushhal Singh to invade the Patiala territory.[1]

Marathas help the Patiala Raja, December, 1785-January, 1786

Khushhal Singh of the Singhpuria Misl accepted the invitation and carried fire and sword in the Patiala territory, and seized some places such as Chhat and Banur. Sahib Singh deputed Diwan Nanumal to seek assistance from Dhar Rao for recovering the territory on a promise of three lakhs of rupees and five thousand rupees per day for the expenses of troops with responsibility to supply ammunition.

Dhar Rao agreed and advanced northward. On the way he received submission from Baghel Singh at Thanesar and from Lal Singh at Kaithal. Dhar Rao reached Banur (20 kms north of Ambala), and fought against the Sikh invaders who were ultimately repulsed. The Sikhs fled back to the Jullundur Doāb, and the Raja took possession of all his lost lands. Nanumal gratefully offered to Dhar Rao a sum of five lakhs of rupees, and the Maratha chief returned to Karnal.

Here he came to know that some Sikh chiefs had taken advantage of his absence from his head-quarters, had cut into his rear, and invaded the Doāb. He wanted to issue out in their pursuit when news arrived that Raja Gajpat Singh had died on the 18th January, 1786, and that two of his sons were fighting for the succession. Some time afterwards Gajpat Singh's younger son (Bhup Singh) waited upon Dhar Rao and surrendered Safidon to the Marathas though afterwards it passed on to Raja Bhag Singh. Dhar Rao had not yet adopted any measures against the Sikh invaders of the Doāb, when he was taken ill. He went to Delhi, and was succeeded by his son. As the young man could not properly manage the affairs of the Sikhs, he was replaced by Baluji Ingle, the younger brother of Ambaji Ingle.[2]

[1] *Dilliyethil*, I, 159, 160, 187, 194; Sardesai, 431, 473; Parasnis, I, 98, 106; V, 130; Bakhtmal, 136-39; Khushwaqt Rae, 170; Muhammad Hasan, 126-30; Bute Shah, 284b-86a; George Thomas, 105.

[2] *Dilliyethil*, I, 208.

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The Sikhs ravage the Doāb and Delhi, January, 1786

To the northward of Delhi, Sindhia's difficulties arose chiefly from the Sikhs who obstructed the collection of his revenues. A Marathi despatch states: "In the imperial territory from Panipat to Delhi the Sikhs and Gujars are carrying on their depredations. They have blocked the highways. The Emperor's rule exists as usual from Panipat to Koil (Aligarh), where the Sikhs realize *rākhi*. The Gujars of the neighbourhood of Delhi commit robberies at night in the city."[1] "The lawless activities of Gujar *zamindars* have made it difficult to travel even from Delhi to Shahdara, a distance of 5 kms."[2]

In January, 1786, when Dhar Rao was busy in assisting the Patiala Raja, Bhanga Singh, Karam Singh and other Sikh chiefs with 5,000 horse crossed the Jamuna and plundered a few villages near Ghausgarh. Then they ravaged Meerut, Hapur and Garhmuktesar. To expel the Sikhs from the Doāb Ravloji Sindhia reached Hapur at the head of nearly 7,000 cavalry, with ten pieces of cannon. The Sikhs marched back towards the Jamuna. Ravloji pursued them as far as Kairana. The Sikhs crossed the river into their own territory; but a body of them under Karam Singh managed to escape towards Ghausgarh and committed ravages. Bapuji Malhar and Devji Gavle with a force of 3,000 were sent after them. As the Sikhs and Gujars who were working in concert were larger in number, the Marathas refrained from fighting. To drive away the Sikhs from the Delhi district Ganpat Rao Krishan came from Meerut to Baghpat; while Shah Nizam-ud-din reached Delhi. Ganpat Rao was joined by Haibat Rao Phalke; but the Dallewalia Sikh *sardars* with a body of 4,000 horse were ready to oppose them. Shyam Rao Appaji at the head of two regiments of infantry and 500 cavalry with Ghulam Qadir as his assistant was sent to Panipat to guard the imperial frontier. The Sikhs were afraid of being intercepted in their rear by the Maratha forces, and decided to return home before Appaji and Ghulam Qadir would reach the Karnal district. By this time they had acquired a large booty and with it they retired to this side of the Jamuna.[3]

[1]ibid, I, 168.
[2]ibid, 168, 173, 178, 180, 208; *P.R.C.*, I, 51, 59.
[3]N.A.I., *Secret Proceedings*, 8 January, 1787, p. 69; 31 January, 1787, pp. 712-14.

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Forster deputed to negotiate with the Sikhs, July, 1786 to August, 1787

John Macpherson, the Governor-General, wanted to protect the dominions of the Nawab of Oudh from the incursions of the Sikhs, and he also aimed at forming an alliance with them for the purpose of promoting British interests in northern India. To achieve these two objects he deputed George Forster who had already travelled through the Sikh territories, and was familiar with the important traits of their character, on 19 July, 1786, to proceed to Lucknow. He was instructed "not to enter into any specific engagements, with the Sikh Chiefs or their *vakils*, without being furnished with my previous consent. Later on Lord Cornwallis in a letter of the 24th October, 1786, further directed him: "Whilst you endeavour to obtain as much information as possible of the designs of the Sikhs, and our northern neighbours, you will decline upon as civil pretexts as you can receiving their advances towards any engagements."

Forster despatched his agent to the Sikh chiefs. Besides other instructions he was charged with the duty "to obtain some regular intelligence of the motions, and perhaps the designs of a people, who have the ability, from our want of cavalry, to do much mischief in Rohilcand, as has been already experienced."

This agent reported in December, 1786 that the Sikh chiefs were well disposed to the British Government and cherished no hostile intentions towards the Nawab of Oudh. About the 21st December Forster received letters from Rae Singh, Bhanga Singh and Gurdit Singh, who made "warm professions of an amicable disposition towards the English Government."

Forster recommended the Sikh *vakil* at Lucknow to the Governor-General for some financial assistance, stating that "an act of attention of this kind, my Lord, may be in some degree conducive in keeping the Sikhs in good humour."

About the end of December Forster received intelligence that the Sikhs had spread over that part of the Ganga Doāb which was held by Sindhia, and in a smart action had defeated one of his regiments stationed near Anupshahar.

The famous ford of Anupshahar on the Ganga lay within easy reach of them. The Raja of the place who was a subordinate to the Nawab of Oudh was frightened, and in order to save his territory from their depredations offered them money with a view "to buy them off from committing any hostility on the Vizier's country."

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Forster called upon the Sikh *vakil* to supply information on the subject. He told Forster that for some years past the Sikhs had collected *rākhi* amounting to Rs 2,000 per annum from the Raja of Anupshahar, and the Sikhs "had at that time no other design than procuring this amount."

Colonel Harper did not accept this view and took strong objection to the Raja's action. He conveyed his feelings to the Governor-General.

Cornwallis agreed with Harper, and replied to him on the 25th January, 1787: "I received your letter of the tenth instant and perfectly agree with you in reprobating the disgraceful mode adopted by the Rajah of Anopshere, of buying off the hostilities of the Sick Chiefs which must effectually insure their return, whenever they are in want of more money. I must beg of you to represent to the Vizier in the strongest terms my disapprobation of this weak and contemptible conduct."[1]

The Sikhs were led to carry on their incursions from the dread and distrust caused by the establishment of the Maratha power in their neighbourhood. Another cause of quarrel is also explained by Forster: "Exclusive of the territories immediately in the possession of the Sikhs, they collect from their weaker neighbours a tribute called by them *Rākhi*, resembling in some degree the *Chout* of the Marathas, though in a smaller proportion; that being a fourth of the whole, whereas the *Rākhi* seldom exceeds four and five per cent on the produce. It is in the levying this last species of contribution that disputes arise between the Marathas and the Sikhs."

At this part of the year the rivers had become fordable and though Forster had established friendly relations with the Sikhs, he feared that in view of the "wholly defenceless" position of Rohilkhand, the Sikhs might be tempted to invade that country. He stated: "Were the Sikhs to enter Rohilkhand, they can meet with no obstruction or opposition, excepting from the troops at the Fathgarh station, which could not afford protection to that country in a less time than fifteen or twenty days, and I much doubt that they could then give any efficient succour when the progress of infantry is brought into comparison with the rapid marches of Sikh cavalry."[2]

[1]N.A.I., *Secret Proceedings*, 8 January, 1787, p. 69; 31 January, 1787, pp. 712-14.

[2]Foster in P.R.C., I, 95.

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Cornwallis indicated his own policy with regard to the Sikhs in view of the weak position of Rohilkhand: "I wish to live on friendly terms with them; but whilst Sindhia commits no breach of his treaty with us they must have no encouragement to hope that we will favour any political connection with them. I am perfectly sensible of the defenceless state of Rohilkhand and shall think of means for its better security; but if in the meantime the Sick should invade it, I shall be at some pain to make them cautious in future of giving us that kind of provocation."

Nevertheless the Governor-General was anxious to show friendly attitude towards the Sikhs. For this purpose he thought it best to please the Sikh *vakil* at Lucknow where he was not receiving proper attention. He wrote to Colonel Harper that as it "might be convenient to live on friendly terms, and perhaps contribute to prevent that nation from making an irruption into Rohilcund, he should be glad if without committing Government, any good offices could be rendered to the *vakeel* by Rajah Ticket Roy so as to incline him and to give him the allowances that are natural to men in his character from neighbouring states."[1]

Forster's last letter available in the Poona Residency Records is dated the 7th August, 1787. He seems to have been recalled shortly afterwards. The Secret Committee approved of the Governor-General's action: "The conduct of Lord Cornwallis in withdrawing Mr. Forster's commission for negotiating with the Sikhs, was extremely judicious, and consonant to the general line of policy which we wish to see fully established."[2]

The Sikhs write friendly letters to Jahandar Shah and the Governor-General, January, 1787

On the 24th January, 1787, Gurdit Singh, Rae Singh, Bhag Singh and Diwan Singh wrote letters to Prince Jahandar Shah, the refugee son of Shah Alam II at Lucknow, assuring him of their "attachment and fidelity" and "whole-hearted support." They stated that they had with them a "force of about 50,000 horse ready to lay down

[1]N.A.I., *Secret Letters to Court*, 1786-1792, VII, pp. 187-88.

[2]*P.R.C.*, I, 95-102; N.A.I., *Secret Proceedings*, 8 January, 1787, p. 69; 31 January, 1787, pp. 712-14, 718-23; 9 April, 1787, pp. 2155-78; 25 April, 1787, pp. 2443-45; *General Letters from the Secret Committee to Fort William*, 31 July, 1788, I, p. 695, paragraph 12; *Miscellaneous Records for the Foreign Department*, no. 46.

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their lives for him with the concurrence of the English." Letters to the same effect were written about the same time to the Governor-General.[1]

The Sikhs were planning a campaign into Rohilkhand at this time, and these letters appear to have been written with the object of calming any apprehension in the mind of the English so that they might be taken unawares.

The Governor-General, however, could not be deceived by such tricks. He was fully aware what was taking place far away from the frontiers of Oudh. On the 23rd January, 1787, the Governor-General wrote to the Secret Committee in England: "Colonel Harper has pointed out to the Nabob Vizier the necessity of giving the strictest orders to his troops in the neighbourhood of Anoopsheer and Daranagur to be upon their guard against any sudden movement of the Seiks towards any part of his Excellency's frontier and has told him that if his Excellency approved it, Colonel Knudson might be directed to advance a detachment of the Futtygurh Brigade under his command towards Anoopsheer to prevent any misfortunes from a sudden attack from these plunderers."[2]

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Ghulam Qadir's territory plundered by the Sikhs, February, 1787

Finding the English prepared to oppose their penetration into Rohilkhand the Sikhs gave up this idea, and turned in another direction. At this time Ghulam Qadir was on his way to Delhi to seek assistance from Sindhia in case of an attack of the Sikhs; but chiefly to comply with that chief's previous orders for his presence in the capital.[3] The Rohilla chief had withheld payment of *rākhī* due to the Sikhs amounting to about a lakh of rupees, which his father Zabita Khan had agreed to pay to them. The Sikhs were on the look-out to find an opportunity to coerce him. Taking advantage of his absence they retraced their steps from the Ganga towards Ghausgarh. On hearing this Ghulam Qadir hastened back to his head-quarters. He found safety only in adjusting his differences with them. Consequently, he paid to some chiefs their share of the *rākhī*, and they stopped their hostilities; but others whose

[1] *C.P.C.*, VII, 1065, 1119.

[2] N.A.I., *General Letters to Secret Committee*, 1786-1792, VII, pp. 133-35.

[3] The Sikh vakil at Lucknow told Forster that Ghulam Qadir himself had planned the Sikh incursion in order to avoid going to Sindhia. (*P.R.C.*, I, 97.)

Forster, however, wished for their disagreement to continue in order to prevent the Sikhs "from giving us molestation." ibid, 99.

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claims were not satisfied continued to fight.

Ambaji's expedition to Panipat, February, 1787

In order to divert the attention of the Sikhs, and to enable Ghulam Qadir to comply with his wishes, Sindhia sent Ambaji Ingle, one of his best officers, to proceed at the head of a considerable force[1] towards Panipat. He was required to win over the Sikhs not to attack the crown-lands and to stop their incursions into the Doāb. Ambaji left Delhi on the 15th February, 1787. The Sikhs were naturally perturbed and were "desirous of forming a connection with our (the British) Government that they may ward off the blow meditated against them." Baghel Singh who was given *parganahs* worth four lakhs of rupees was the first Sikh chief to join Ambaji with 1,000 horse. Griffin writes: "Sirdar Baghel Singh Krora Singhia made his submission, for this chief was generally the first to welcome an invader and follow him as a jackal the lion to obtain a share of the prey, however, insignificant."[2] He was, however, closely watched by other Sikhs who were determined to oppose the Maratha advance. Karam Singh and Gurdit Singh got ready to check Ambaji with about 12,000 troops. The Maratha general offered to take Sikh soldiers in his army on the daily wages of six annas per horseman, but these Sikh *sardars* insisted on getting *jagirs*.

The Sikhs commence lawless activities, March-April, 1787

Ambaji engaged the Sikhs in peace parleys, and the Sikhs in order to secure the most lenient terms wanted to arouse his alarm still further. Thus some of their parties commenced their lawless activities in all directions. One of their bands approached the western bank of the Ganga opposite Daranagar early in March. They fired upon a detachment of the Nawab of Oudh stationed there and wounded some sepoys. But owing to their insufficient strength they did not attempt forcing a passage across the river. This step was probably taken by the Sikhs to coerce the English to join them against the Marathas. The Sikhs turned back and got

[1]Ambaji had under his own personal control sixteen battalions, each consisting of 400 men, and provided with five pieces of artillery (*Memoirs of George Thomas*, 266).

[2]Griffin, *The Rajas of the Punjab*, 59.

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busy in laying waste Ghulam Qadir's possessions. Another party of the Sikhs cut into the rear of Ambaji and ravaged the imperial territory of Sonepat early in April. A body of Marathas attacked them in the night, seized some of their horses and drove them away.

Ghulam Qadir joins Ambaji, April, 1787

Ambaji called upon Ghulam Qadir to join him immediately in fighting against the Sikhs. The Rohilla chief who was then residing at Saharanpur delayed his departure. The Sikhs who were fighting with him suspended their hostilities in order to prevent a connection being formed between him and the Marathas.

About the 10th April, 1787, Ghulam Qadir left Saharanpur, and in a few days joined Ambaji at Karnal. Their united forces did not take any active measures against the Sikhs who were lying encamped round the camp of Ambaji "between whom and that people there appears to exist much ill-will and want of confidence." In Ghulam Qadir's absence his country was overrun by a body of Sikhs, "who on the pretence of collecting a *rākhi* (tribute) have committed great devastations there."

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Ambaji marches into Patiala territory, May-June, 1787

Mahadji Sindhia was at this time busy fighting in Jaipur and he needed money badly. He transmitted instructions to Ambaji to penetrate into the Sikh country as far as Patiala and to levy tribute from all the chiefs of the Cis-Satluj territory. Kirkpatrick's opinion was that "the claim to tribute advanced by the Mahrattas could not be disputed by these petty chiefs; both because having always been accustomed to pay it to Nujjif Khan, it was become established; and because they were unable to collect any force capable of contending with that headed by Ambajee "[1]

In accordance with these instructions, Ambaji pushed on towards Thanesar. On the way he did not experience any opposition from the Sikhs, but he failed in raising more than thirty thousand rupees of tribute. Hardly had he advanced as far as Thanesar when he received orders from Sindhia not to proceed farther, and to be ready to retreat in order to join him at a moment's notice.

This decision was precipitated by the serious situation at Jaipur, and Sindhia realized that he could not do without Ambaji's forces.

[1]N.A.I., *Secret Proceedings*, 20 June, 1787, pp. 3502-3.

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Ambaji having performed certain religious rites at Thanesar ordered his army to march to Patiala. He had not proceeded far when he received the most urgent orders to retreat with all possible haste. Sindhia had also despatched letters for Ghulam Qadir, Begam Samru and other chiefs serving under Ambaji. The Maratha general was in sore need of money, and besides he was not prepared to beat a hasty retreat for fear of displaying the weakness of the Marathas. So he suppressed these letters and continued his advance. He halted at Pehowa and then at Ghuram, 25 kms south of Patiala. Here he was joined by Diwan Nanumal who had been deputed by Raja Sahib Singh to settle the arrears of the tribute claimed by Sindhia.

About the end of May Ambaji concluded a treaty with the Sikh chiefs. "The Sikhs bound themselves to desist from their depredations and to relinquish their claim to *rākhi* or tribute from the possessions of the Marathas who engaged to bestow on them a compensation in lands for this concession." Diwan Nanumal was "very slow in his advances to a settlement." Ambaji on the other hand was very pressing as he apprehended lest the fatal secret of his recall might be known to the astute Diwan.

Kirkpatrick, the Resident with Sindhia, in a letter of the 2nd June, 1787, wrote to Cornwallis: "It is, however, certain that he would have great difficulty in obeying his master's orders at this time, and it is even probable that he would find the matter altogether impracticable were he to attempt it. The whole of his detachment are considerably in arrears and he has no funds from which to satisfy them in any degree excepting what depends upon his settlement with the Diwan of Sahib Singh. It is therefore to ensure the successful issue of this negotiation, that Ambaji wishes to conceal the orders which he has received, for were these to transpire, or were he to take any steps towards complying with them, there would at once be an end to all his pecuniary expectations from this quarter."

There was another cause of weakness of Ambaji's position. His army contained not only Marathas, but also Muslims and Sikhs. The Raja of Jaipur was in correspondence with the non-Maratha troops, and created a spirit of defection, particularly in the minds of Baghel Singh and other Sikh chiefs.

Ghulam Qadir also was not sincere in his devotion to Sindhia. His uncle Afzal Khan had promised to Sindhia to draw off all the

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Rohillas serving in the army of the Raja of Jaipur. Sindhia therefore conferred upon him *jagirs*, honours and other favours. This aroused feelings of jealousy in Ghulam Qadir's mind. Besides, intrigues of the confederacy against Sindhia made him disaffected. The shrewd Nanumal took advantage of this situation. He secretly offered a bribe of Rs. 20,000 to Ghulam Qadir on the condition of his immediate desertion from the Maratha camp. Consequently Ghulam Qadir left Ambaji on the 4th June, and accompanied by Rae Singh of Buriya retired to Saharanpur.

Krikpatrick wrote to the Governor-General, dated Agra, 2nd June, 1787: "He (Ghulam Qadir) has latterly, however, thrown off the mask, and plainly declared that having no confidence in the faith either of Sindhia or of Ambaji, he is determined not to put himself into the power of one or the other of them. It being impossible that he should ever be able to heal the breach which his contumacy on this occasion has caused betwixt him and Sindhia, it is not altogether unlikely, that he may be meditating an alliance with the Raja of Jyanagar."[1]

Ambaji on learning the departure of the Rohilla chief showed no sign of anxiety, and announced his determination of advancing to Patiala. Baghel Singh and Nanumal supported him in this design. This aroused Ambaji's suspicion, as he knew that an agent from Jaipur was in Baghel Singh's camp with offers of money to secure his disaffection.

Ambaji clearly saw that in advancing farther there was a danger of complete destruction of his army, while in retreat he expected regular harassment, loss of some baggage, diminution of his prestige and probably the calamity of a visit by the Sikhs on the neighbourhood of Delhi. But being a renowned general of great experience he might have held his ground and by diplomacy he might have converted the situation favourable to him. Sindhia's urgent letters, however, were so pressing that he could not help but decide for a retreat. He therefore marched backward without coming to an agreement with Nanumal on the 7th June. Such was the fearless attitude of the Maratha general that the Sikhs committed no act of hostility, and Baghel Singh and several other chiefs who had joined him at Panipat escorted him on his return journey.

Ambaji, "a man of considerable spirit and military reputation"

[1]Ibid, p. 3501.

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and "without exception the best officer in the service of Sindhia," however, felt exceedingly hurt at his recall from "an expedition in which he engaged with a sanguine expectation of acquiring an increase both of fame and fortune." Shortly after his march his rear was molested by some lightly equipped bodies of Sikhs. In the night attacks he lost some baggage and 200 heads of cattle. But he did not suffer so much as he had anticipated. He reached Karnal on the 14th June, and appointed Bakhshi Shyam Rao his deputy. He was provided with 2,000 Maratha and Hindustani horse, six battalions of infantry including the battalions of Begam Samru and 3,000 horse of Baghel Singh and other Sikh chiefs.

Ambaji left Karnal on the 16th June accompanied by 1,000 horse, the *risalas* of Murad Beg Khan and Ahmad Khan Bharaich, two battalions of infantry and twenty-five pieces of cannon. He reached Delhi on the 22nd June and joined Sindhia on the 16th July.[1]

Ghulam Qadir incites the Sikhs against Sindhia, July-August, 1787

The withdrawal of Ambaji to Jaipur greatly encouraged Ghulam Qadir. Some other factors also combined to make the Rohilla chief master of the situation. Mahadji Sindhia had failed to crush the power of the Raja of Jaipur chiefly owing to treachery and dissensions in his own army and the utter failure of supply of provisions. On the 1st of August he beat a hasty retreat and reached Dig on the 8th August. "The news of it," says Sir Jadunath, "at once shivered his newly built and ill-knit dominion into a hundred fragments. A world of enemies raised their heads against him; rivals for his position as imperial Regent, heirs of old houses whom he had dispossessed, Hindustani officers whose vast alienations of Crownlands (worth 70 lakhs of rupees a year) he had taken back, greedy old courtiers whose perquisites and cor-

[1]ibid, *Secret Proceedings*, 27 December, 1786, pp. 2155-60; 8 January, 1787, p. 69; 21 January, 1787, pp. 2161-62; 30 January, 1787, pp. 2163-67; 31 January, 1787, pp. 712-23; 5 February, 1787, pp. 2168-69; 24 February, 1787, pp. 2170-73; 5 March, 1787, pp. 2173-75; 9 March, 1787, p. 1584; 15 March, 1787, pp. 2175-78; 9 April, 1787, pp. 2142-54; 11 April, 1787, pp. 2443-45; 13 April, 1787, pp. 2340-41; 2 May, 1787, p. 2732; 20 June, 1787, pp. 3497-508; 2 July, 1787, p. 3628; *General Letters to Secret Committee*, 1786-92; VII, pp. 133-35, 187-9; *Miscellaneous Records of the Foreign Department*, no. 46; *P.R.C.*, I, 90-102, 109, 112, 115, 116, 117, 119-20, 123, 129, 134-41; *Dilliyethil*, I, 180, 206, 226, 237, 254, 256; *C.P.C.*, VII, 119, 1560; Bakhtmal, 140-42; Gian Singh, 956-57.

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rupt influence he had curbed, and the entire North Indian Muslim society to whom the regency of a Hindu was an abomination."[1]

Among the first to throw off allegiance to Sindhia was Ghulam Qadir Rohilla. He strengthened his military position by compelling all his *jagirdars* to supply him with troops. Then he put his whole army into motion with a view to overrun all the Maratha territories in the upper Ganga Doāb. About the middle of July he left Saharanpur, encamped on the banks of Jamuna, and opened negotiations with Baghel Singh and other Sikh chiefs to join him in his attack on the imperial territory. To Begam Samru he promised not only extension of her jagir but a share in the administration of affairs if she would support his authority. She refused this offer, and advanced with her troops towards Delhi where she was welcomed by the Emperor. This caused considerable apprehension in the mind of Bakhshi Shyam Rao, the Maratha commander at Karnal; but Ghulam Qadir did not harass him and proceeded by slow marches to Delhi. He endeavoured all the while "to draw the Sikhs towards the Delhi quarter."

Some Sikhs ultimately accepted the offer and marched towards the imperial capital. On the 23rd July they attacked Shahdara. On the 26th July a body of about 500 Sikhs plundered the country between Delhi and Agra.

The Sikh chiefs were still bargaining with Ghulam Qadir. On the 27th July he invited *vakils* of the Sikhs to discuss terms. They expressed their willingness provided the Rohilla, chief would restore to them their property plundered by him previously. That day Ghulam Qadir asked Begam Samru to deliver her artillery to him and to join him, but she declined declaring that she was a faithful servant of the Emperor and would not do so without his consent.

Ghulam Qadir who was still busy in organising his troops was encamped at Bidauli (16 kms south-east of Karnal on the eastern side of the Jamuna) on the 29th July.[2] Bakhshi Shyam Rao advanced from Karnal to Mirgain *Ghat* on the Jamuna to intimi-

[1]Sarkar, III, 393.

[2]This day the Emperor wrote letters for assistance to Prince Jahandar Shah, Akbar Ali Khan, brother of Sher Din Khan Mandal, Begam Samru, Ganpat Rao, Gurdit Singh and Baghel Singh under his personal seal and signature. (*Intikhab-e-Akhbarat*, 41.)

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date Ghulam Qadir who maintained his advance steadily. Baghel Singh still stayed at Karnal and postponed joining the Maratha chief on frivolous grounds. A letter of the 7th August stated: "The Sikhs by the letters of this day are moving towards Ghulam Qadir's camp which is daily growing." On the 10th August Bakhshi Shyam Rao's letter stated that Baghel Singh in league with Ghulam Qadir Khan caused a tumult in his territory; but Begam Samru came to his rescue and stopped their mischief.

The Sikh-Rohilla advance upon Delhi, August-September, 1787

Seizing Jhinjhana, Barnawa, Baraut, Budhana and Sikandarabad, etc. Ghulam Qadir advanced upon Delhi. The time was opportune for ample gratification of Ghulam Qadir's ambitious projects. The capital lay unprotected, and there was an opportunity for the Rohilla chief to obtain the office of Mir Bakhshi enjoyed by his father and grandfather. Sindhia had two agents in Delhi, Shah Nizam-ud-din and his own son-in-law Ladoji Shitole Deshmukh. They were unable to hold Sindhia's cause for want of men and money. Against them Ghulam Qadir had Nazir Manzur Ali Khan, the all-powerful superintendent of the royal harem and confidant of the Emperor.

Ghulam Qadir was at Baghpat on the 21st August, and he appeared on the Jamuna opposite Delhi on the 23rd August. A body of the Sikhs had already joined him. This day's news-letters reported that Ghulam Qadir and the Sikhs fought with the imperial guards and defeated them. Madho Rao Phalke, the Maratha chieftain, was sent to oppose them at Shahdara. In the fight many persons were drowned in the river, while a large number were killed and wounded. Shah Nizam-ud-din and Deshmukh were watching the scene from Diwan-e-Khas. They came to the bank of the river and from there showered balls and bullets on the Sikhs for two hours. When the Sikhs came in front of them they returned. Carts laden with cash and goods were plundered by soldiers. Phalke saved his men by shutting himself up in the fort of Shahdara and then surrendered. Deshmukh fled away from Delhi at 10 o'clock in the night of the 23rd August at the head of 500 Marathas, and took the Ballabgarh road to Dig. Shah Nizam-ud-din also considered it advisable to follow suit. In their hasty flight a good deal of their baggage was plundered on the road from the house of Firoz Shah to the Western Serai.

On the 25th August the Emperor wrote letters for assistance

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against Ghulam Qadir to the English,[1] Mahadji Sindhia, Begam Samru, Bakhshi Shyam Rao and the Sikh chiefs. He sent frantic appeals to the Nawab of Oudh and even to Prince Jahandar Shah then living at Lucknow. On the 27th August Bakhshi Shyam Rao's letter arrived stating that he could not maintain his position at Karnal owing to the Sikh rebellion. He handed over Karnal to Bhag Singh of Jind and escorted by Diwan Singh proceeded to Delhi. He reached Panipat on the 24th August, but was detained there till the 28th on account of the rebellious disposition of his army and the high demands of Begam Samru to whom he was forced to cede Panipat. He also agreed toact entirely by her direction.

On the 30th August the Emperor again wrote urgent letters to Baghel Singh. On the 31st August the Emperor said to Rormal, the *vakil* of Baghel Singh: "Write to Baghel Singh to seize all the territories of Ghulam Qadir Khan, as we have appointed him our agent of that country." On the 1st September letters were written to Baghel Singh, Begam Samru and Bakhshi Shyam Rao to travel to Delhi by the side of Bahadurgarh. On the 2nd September Baghel Singh's and Shyam Rao's letters announced that they were speedily advancing to the capital. Rormal secured a royal rescript in favour of his master for capturing Ghulam Qadir's territories.

On the 3rd September news arrived that Begam Samru, Gurdit Singh

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the control of the crown-lands in his hands."[1]

The divided allegiance of the Sikhs, September-October, 1787

On the 8th September the battalions of Begam Samru, Bakhshi Shyam Rao and Baghel Singh reached Delhi. The Emperor remarked that if the forces of Shah Nizam-ud-din and Deshmukh had been there Ghulam Qadir would have been unable to resist him. He also stated that the Sikhs had acted in hurry in joining Ghulam Qadir. The Rohilla regent now tried to win over to his side Begam Samru and Baghel Singh. The Begam rejected the proposal declaring that she would never betray the Emperor and would always serve him most faithfully.[2] "It is strange," recorded Thomas Twining in 1794, "to see a woman's arm sustaining the falling empire of the Mogols, but the Begum, always aiding the cause which appeared the least strong or the most just, was the constant ally of the Emperor Shah Allum, and on more occasions than one was the intrepid defender both of his person and throne."[2] She maintained her ground with four battalions of disciplined and trained soldiers and eighty-five guns. But Baghel Singh joined Ghulam Qadir.

Ghulam Qadir realized his weak position against Begam Samru and he found his safety in securing possession of the fortress of Aligarh. Consequently, he recrossed the Jamuna into the Doāb on the 13th September when he was joined by some more Sikh chiefs. Only Bhanga Singh remained loyal to the Emperor and worked in collaboration with the Begam in manning the walls and trenches of the capital.

On the 15th September letters of Gurdit Singh and Baghel Singh were received by the Emperor. They stated that as Sindhia had not cared for them they unwillingly went over to the side of Ghulam Qadir. Ghulam Qadir tried his utmost to win over other Sikhs chiefly for the safety of his hereditary possessions.

On the 21st September the Emperor was informed that the Sikhs were making mischief in the crownlands. It was also reported that Najaf Quli Khan with a body of Sikhs and Rohillas was proceeding towards Rewari. On the 23rd September Manyar Singh's battalions were encamped at Shahdara; while Gurdit Singh with some other Sikh chiefs was stationed at Okhla Ghat. On the 26th September Dhar Rao was instructed to secure the services of Babu

[1] *Delhi Chronicle*, 382-83; *Tarikh-e-Muzaffari*, 222a-b; Sarkar, III, 434.
[2] *Travels in India*, 263.

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Singh and other Sikhs for the Emperor. The same day Bakhshi Shyam Rao's letter announced that Gurdit Singh and others were attached to Ghulam Qadir, but Baghel Singh was growing disaffected owing to the negotiations of Begam Samru.

On the 27th September Baghel Singh's letter arrived asking for money in the first instance to assure desertion from Ghulam Qadir's camp. On the 28th September Sikhs and Rohillas ravaged the village of Deodah.[1] On the 30th September Baghel Singh waited upon Nazir Manzur Ali. He offered to the Nawab one bow and one *khes*, and received in return five trays of clothes and one *doshala*.

On the 15th October, 1787, the Emperor conferred upon Bhanga Singh a robe of honour, a *jigha* with a jewel, a *sarpech*, a jacket, a sword and an elephant.

The British Government's attitude towards the Sikhs, November 1787

The Marathas were greatly exasperated at the rebellious attitude of the Sikhs. Sindhia alone was incapable of taking any effective steps against them, as for some months past Mahadji's power had been constantly declining. He had lost Ajmer on the 27th August and Agra on the 16th September. The Doāb and Delhi had been captured by Ghulam Qadir who had been appointed regent of the empire in his place. His garrison at Aligarh was holding out eventually to fall a few months later. Sindhia stayed at Alwar up to the 2nd November and then came to Rewari to try in vain to bring the Emperor over to his own side.

The Maratha agents made an attempt to secure British assistance against their common enemy the Sikhs. On the 14th November, 1787, Bhau Bakhshi suggested to William Palmer, Resident with Sindhia, to take a concerted action against the Sikhs. He explained that the Sikhs were in the habit of ravaging imperial territory under Sindhia's care in the Doāb, and also the country of the Nawab of Oudh. "It appeared absolutely necessary for both parties to join in avenging these predatory incursions." Palmer was fully aware of the weakness of the Maratha position, and therefore considered the proposal "ill timed," and expressed his strong apprehensions that an action against the Sikhs would excite them to ravage the Oudh territory. On Bhau's tenacity to the subject

[1]The location of this village could not be traced in the Survey Maps.

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Palmer replied: "I observed that our Government had no kind of connection with the Sikhs, that if they should invade our dominions or those of the Vizier, we should repel and punish them; that Mahajee Sindia, whilst he held the administration of the King's affairs, was the proper judge of the conduct of the Sikhs towards his majesty, and that our Government would not think it had a right to interfere in such measures as he might adopt to restrain, or to resent, their encroachments upon the royal authority or dominions."

Just about this time the Minister of the Nawab of Oudh represented to the British Resident at Lucknow that the Sikhs and Ghulam Qadir's troops were approaching towards the fords on the Ganga near Bareilly. He requested that the brigade of Fatahgarh should be stationed at Anupshahar. The Governor-General instructed Edward Otto Ives, the Resident, to require two or three regiments for this purpose. At the same time he informed Ghulam Qadir of the intended march of the detachment explaining to him that he should not suspect any unfriendly act on the part of the English Government unless he gave them provocation.[1]

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The Sikhs join Najaf Quli against the Emperor, March, 1788

Ghulam Qadir and his Sikh allies returned to Delhi early in October, 1787, and bombarded the fort from the eastern bank of the Jamuna on the 7th October. On the 30th October twelve large balls fell in the palace and killed a child in the court-yard of the Diwan-e-Am.

At this juncture the Emperor summoned his son Jahandar Shah from Lucknow. He returned to the capital on the 8th December, 1787; and made a futile attempt to confine his father, seize the fort and place himself on the throne. In this matter he was encouraged by his adviser Khair-ud-din, the well-known author of *Ibrat Namah* who told the prince that he had won over the following persons

[1] *Intikhab-e-Akhbarat-e-Durbar-e-Mualla Wa Mahadji Sindhia Bahadur*, Salar Jang MS. no. 4329, from 6 July, 1787 to 8 October, 1787, folios 30, 33, 34, 41, 72, 104, 108, 120, 136, 141, 144, 146-48, 151, 156, 159, 161, 172, 176, 182, 186, 190, 191, 197, 201, 202, 205, 210, 212-15, 221, 223; *P.R.C.*, I, 133-34, 141, 143-44, 148-49, 162, 167, 170, 186, 187; *Delhi Chronicle*, 385; *Tarikh-e-Muzaffari*, 223a-224a; *C.P.C.*, VII, 1552, 1560, 1595-99, 1616-17, 1621-22, 1630, 1645, *Dilliyethil*, I, 225-28; *Marathi Riyasat*, 135; N.A.I., *Secret Letters to Cour* 1786-92, VII, pp. 462-63.

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in his cause: "Ghias-ud-din Muhammad Khan with 500 horse and 1,000 foot; Badal Beg Khan with 500 horse and 1,000 foot; Shah Mir Khan with 300 horse and 500 foot; Murad Beg Khan with 600 horse and 1,000 foot; Rustam Khan with 400 horse and 600 foot; Mansur Khan and Muhammad Khan with 300 horse and 200 foot; Ahmad Ali Khan and Najabat Ali Khan Bharaich with 1,000 horse and 1,500 foot; Shahamat Khan and Imam-ud-din Khan, sons of Sayyid Muhammad Khan Baluch, with 700 horse and 300 foot; Raja Baghel Singh with 5,000 horse; Jiwan Khan with 300 horse and 500 foot and Zafaryab Khan, son of Samru, and his mother Zeb-un-Nisa Begam [co-wife of the Begam] with four sepoy battalions, 500 Turkish horse and 80 pieces of cannon."[1]

Meanwhile Sindhia had sustained another reverse on the 20th December, when he was driven away beyond the Chambal by Ismail Beg. The Emperor therefore considered it politic to pardon Ghulam Qadir publicly for his outrage on the palace and confirmed him in the high posts already conferred upon him. Ghulam Qadir again set out to capture the fort of Aligarh which ultimately fell on the 17th February, 1788.

In the absence of Ghulam Qadir from the capital, the Emperor received a tempting offer from the Raja of Jaipur to recover the lost crownlands from local usurpers. The Emperor welcomed the opportunity to gain money in the form of tribute from Rajput princes and territory into the bargain. He left Delhi on the 4th January, 1788. At Bharawas (10 kms south of Rewari), the Jaipur agents waited upon him on the 28th January. The Raja attended upon the Emperor on the 3rd February, and after a month's negotiations gave him bankers' bills for Rs. 25,000, and left for Jaipur.

The Emperor then demanded tribute from Najaf Quli Khan who had usurped the district of Rewari. He refused to present himself before the Emperor and either to pay money or to restore the district. Shah Alam decided to fight. He entrenched his camp and placed Begam Samru to his right and his Hindustani generals on his left. The Mughalia troops were in the habit of spending night in drinking and debauchery and to sleep during the early hours of the morning.

Najaf Quli employed a body of Sikhs in his service, and led them

[1]Khair-ud-din, III, 59-64.

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to attack the sleepy sots in the night of the 12th March. The Sikhs slaughtered indiscriminately, and then advanced to the Emperor's tent. By this time Gosain Himmat Bahadur was ready to fight and he drove them back. The Emperor saved himself by taking shelter within the square of Begam Samru's European troops.

Shah Alam was terrified of the Sikhs. At his suggestion Begam Samru opened negotiations with Najaf Quli Khan. Under assurances of safety from the Begam he sought pardon from the Emperor by having tied his wrists with a handkerchief. The Emperor forgave him and confirmed him in his estates. He thereafter returned and reached Delhi on the 23rd March, 1788.

This expedition brought the Emperor no gains either materially or morally. Najaf Quli remained as refractory as before, and he paid him no money. No crown-lands were restored to him by the Rajput princes; and as for the imperial prestige it received a further set-back.[1]

The Sikhs plunder Ghulam Qadir's territory

Under these circumstances the Doāb and the Delhi province lay absolutely unprotected, and the Sikhs could fully display their sentiments of plunder and devastation. The Sikhs did not lose the opportunity and ransacked the Doāb several times from February to June at the time of the harvest. They ravaged the territory of Ghulam Qadir including Ambehta, Ghausgarh and Meerut. Ghulam Qadir was at this time waging war against a body of the Marathas and Jats near Bharatpur; and had won a victory over the allied troops. He immediately hurried back to repel the Sikhs. He encountered his old friends near Meerut and drove them out of the Doāb. Gurdit Singh and Karam Singh Nirmala deserted him and joined Bhanga Singh, though many Sikhs still remained with the Rohilla chieftain. They retired to Thanesar, and decided to attack Delhi and realize *rākhi* from the Doāb after the rains.[2]

Ghulam Qadir's atrocities in Delhi, July-October, 1788

Ghulam Qadir returned to Delhi on the 7th July and plundered

[1]Ibid, 122-27; Ghulam Ali, III, 253-55; Munna Lal, 318-25; *Dilliyethil*, I, 262, 272, 274, 279, 281; Sarkar, III, 426-29.

[2]Parasnis, I, 173, 174, 175; *Calcutta Review*, LXI, 1875, p. 41; *Dilliyethil*, I, 278, 283; Sardesai, 522; N.A.I., *Secret Proceedings*, 17 March, 1788, pp. 694-99.

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Ghaziabad, Shahdara and Patparganj. On hearing this the Emperor ordered Baghel Singh to seize the boats at Barari Ghat and to keep a watch there. Ghulam Qadir, however, managed to cross the river on the 14th July. The Emperor granted him audience on the 15th July.

Then began the reign of terror which lasted till the 2nd October, 1788. The royal family was subjected to unspeakable oppression. The princes and princesses were kept standing in the sun, scourged and tortured. The ladies were stripped naked and exposed to the gaze of his drunken fellow-ruffians. The youthful beauties of the royal palace were compelled to gratify the passions of Rohillas, while the most beautiful women were sent to Ghausgarh for his harem. The princes were made to sing and dance and they were called mean *Dumani bachcha*. The royal family was left without food so that in two days 21 princes and princesses died, and many more were about to die of starvation. All the floors and ceilings of the palace rooms were turned upside down in search of buried treasure. Ghulam Qadir's wife admitted that her husband had secured twenty-five crores of rupees in cash and kind. A large part of it was plundered by the Sikhs and Gujars while on its way to Ghausgarh. It was all a scene of horror and a dance of demons which lasted for nine weeks.

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Sir Jadunath Sarkar writes: "The torture and dishonour inflicted by Ghulam Qadir Khan on the Delhi royal family, on its tender babes and aged women, on its servant girls, eunuchs, petty store-keepers and humble valets as well as the highest princes,—from a long chapter, which fills in my manuscript of Khairuddin's Persin history, 33 foolscap folio pages."

It was not the royal family alone that suffered at the hands of Ghulam Qadir Khan; but the gentry of the city was also not spared. The rich bankers and merchants were imprisoned and deprived of their cash and jewellery; while troops were permitted to plunder the people.[1]

On the 10th August, 1788, Ghulam Qadir sat on the throne and summoned the Emperor before him. He ordered the Emperor to disclose his secret treasures. The Emperor pleaded poverty. Ghulam Qadir at once leaped from the throne, felled Shah Alam on the ground, himself mounted on his breast and took out his eyes

[1]*Selections from Calcutta Gazettes*, I, 264-65; Sayyid Ghulam Husain sums up the character of the Rohillas thus: Rohillas are a strange people notorious for extreme greed and lust. (*Siyar*, III, 88.)

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with a sharp-pointed dagger. He ordered a court painter to draw his picture in that condition.

After committing his horrible crime he tauntingly asked the Emperor if he could see anything. "Nothing," replied the bleeding sufferer, "but the Koran between thee and me," Ghulnm Qadir having previously taken an oath of loyalty on the sacred Book."

Such was the magnanimity and resignation of the sightless, aged Emperor that on this occasion when he was groaning from the effects of torture, bleeding and anguish, he composed a poem with *Aftab* as his pen-name to solace his afflicted heart. The original is omitted for want of space, but its translation is quoted below:

"The storms of affliction have destroyed the Majesty of my Government: and scattered my State to the winds.

"I was even as the sun shining in the firmament of the Empire: but the sun is setting in the sorrowful West.

"It is well for me that I have become blind; for so I am hindered from seeing another on my throne.

"Even as the saints were afflicted by Yazid; so is the ruin that has fallen upon me, through the appointment of Destiny.

"The wealth of this world was my sickness; but now the Lord hath healed me.

"I have received the just reward of mine iniquities; but now He hath forgiven me my sins.

"I gave milk to the young adder; and he became the cause of my destruction.

"The steward who served me thirty years compassed my ruin, but a swift recompense hath overtaken him.

"The lords of my council who had covenanted to serve me; even they deserted me, and took whatsoever in thirty years I had put by for my children.

"Moghuls and Afghans alike failed me; and became confederates in my imprisonment.

"Even the base-born man, of Hamadani, and Gul Mohammad, full of wickedness; Allah Yar also, and Soliman and Badal Beg, all met together for my trouble.

"And now that this Young Afghan hath destroyed the dignity of my empire; I see none but thee, O Most Holy! to have compassion upon me.

"Yet peradventure Timur Shah my kinsman may come to my aid; and Mahadji Sindia, who is even as a son unto me, he also will

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surely avenge my cause.

"Asaf-ud-Daula and the chief of the English; they also may come to my relief.

"Shame were it if Princes and people gathered not together; to the end that they might bring me help.

"Of all the fair women of my chambers none is left to me but Mubarik Mahal.

"O *Āftāb!* verily thou has been this day overthrown by Destiny; yet God shall bless thee and restore thy fallen brightness."[1]

The same calm demeanour and spirit of resignation and fortitude of the Emperor was observed a few years later by Lieutenant William Francklin. He writes: "The present king, Shah Allum, is seventy-two years of age; of a tall commanding stature, and dark complexion; his deportment was dignified, and not at all diminished by his want of sight, though he had suffered that cruel misfortune above five years. The marks of age are very strongly discernible in his countenance; his beard is short and white. His Majesty appeared at our introduction to be in good spirits; said he was happy at our arrival; and desired we would visit his palace, and the fort of Selim Ghur. He was dressed in a rich kheem-khaub, and was supported by pillows of the same material.

"I imagined I could observe in his aspect a thoughtfulness, as if sufficiently well acquainted with his present degraded situation, and the recollection of his former state."[2]

Sindhia punishes Ghulam Qadir

The retribution for Ghulam Qadir was at hand. The Maratha conquest of Delhi began by the end of September, 1788. On the 14th September, Sindhia despatched to Delhi his able general Bhai Rane Khan at the head of a large force. [On the defeat of the Marathas in the third battle of Panipat, Mahadji Sindhia escaped riding on his famous Deccani mare. He was pursued by a huge Afghan mounted on a strong Turkoman horse. Mahadji spurred his mare on and on, but the persevering Afghan continued his chase to the vicinity of Bharatpur (272 kms). There the worn-out mare fell into a ditch. The Afghan inflicted a heavy cut upon the knee of Sindhia, robbed him of all he had, and taking him for dead returned. Rane Khan, a water-carrier, was passing by with his

[1] Keene's *Fall*, 203-4.
[2] *Asiatic Researches*, 1795, p. 428.

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bullock. He felt pity tor Sindhia about whose position he knew nothing, and took him to the town. Sindhia called him *bhai* (brother) and appointed him to a responsible position in his army.][1] To strengthen him another division was sent on the 26th September under Jiva Daoa Bakhshi. Both of them occupied old Delhi on the 28th September, and seized the capital on the 2nd October. They were joined by Begam Samru. Ghulam Qadir took shelter within the fort. The Rohilla chief realized the futility of his position, and in the night sent across the river his booty, baggage and troops retaining a select body for his personal guard. The treasure convoy was plundered on its way to Ghausgarh by the Marathas, Sikhs and Gujars who had converted Saharanpur district into "a lampless desolation." The most precious jewellery, however, was retained by Ghulam Qadir in his own keeping.[2]

Ghulam Qadir left the fort on the 10th October, 1788, taking several princes as captives with him. Rane Khan took the fort the following day and spent some days in providing the needs of the royal family. In the Doāb Ghulam Qadir was opposed by two Maratha commanders—Rayaji Patil and Devji Gavle. They were, however, repulsed on the 12th October. Rane Khan left Delhi on the 3rd November to join them and three days later Ali Bahadur[3] arrived at Mathura with a contingent supplied by Peshwa's Government. He followed them in the pursuit of Ghulam Qadir on the 17th November.

The Rohilla chief had moved to Aligarh; but *qiladar* had submitted to the Marathas on the 20th October. Fighting frequent skirmishes while running from place to place Ghulam Qadir took shelter in the fort of Meerut on the 4th November. The Marathas immediately besieged it. Scarcity of provisions and the rigours of a siege compelled Ghulam Qadir to escape from fort leaving his men,

[1]Fraser, I, 17-18.

[2]Parasnis, I, 144-46, 149-52, 155-56, 186: Sardesai, 531-33, 537-40, 543, 548, 550-52, 555; Maheshwar, II, 181; *Dilliyethil*, 1, 230-31, 304, 306-11, 314, 325, 327, 340, 358-59, 360; N.A.I., *Secret Letters to Court*, VII, 600-1; *Secret Proceedings*, 29 October, 1788, pp. 4317-23; *Selections from Calcutta Gazettes*, I, 262-65; *P.R.C.*, I, 227-35, 243; Khair-ud-din, III, 132-74; Sarkar, III, 441-42.

[3]Ali Bahadur's (son of Peshwa Baji Rao by Mastani and Nawab of Banda) personal military force was as follows:

Regular infantry	2,000	
Irregular infantry	6,000	
Cavalry	7,000	
Artillery	50 pieces.	(George Thomas, 270).

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material and the royal prisoners. Mounting on a horse into whose saddle-bags he stuffed the Emperor's jewellery he stole out at night with a few men.

The Marathas were soon upon him. In the course of flight he was separated from his companions. In the early hours of the morning his weary horse fell into a pit. Throwing away the rider the horse galloped away with its vast amount of riches. Nobody knows what became of this jewellery. In *Skinner's Life* it is conjectured that it came into the possession of M. Lestonneaux, a French officer in Sindhia's service, and at that time engaged in Ghulam Qadir's pursuit. The surmise is further strengthened by the fact that Lestonneaux left Sindhia's service most abruptly "at this very time," and that he enjoyed a large fortune in France. Keene thinks that "the crown jewels of the Great Moghul are now in France."[1] Ghulam Qadir took shelter in the house of a Brahman[2] of Bamnauli[3] (5 kms south-west of Shamli). He was betrayed and captured by Rane Khan on the 19th December, 1788. He was sent to Sindhia at Mathura on the 31st December, 1788, and was put to death on the 4th March, 1789."[4] Ghulam Qadir's body was gradually cut to pieces, ears, nose, hands and feet. His head was sent to Delhi to the blind Emperor, while his body was hung upon a tree. "A trustworthy person relates that a black dog, white round the eyes, came and sat under the tree, and licked up the blood as it dripped. The spectators threw stones and clods at it, but still it kept there. On the third day the corpse disappeared and the dog also vanished."[5]

[1] *Hindustan Under Free Lances*, 39; *Fraser*, 77, *Festing*, 170.

[2] "His captor was a Bhika Ram, who received in reward the village of Timkia in this district, which is still held revenue-free by his descendants." (*Meerut District Gazetteer*, 158.)

[3] *Dilliyethil*, I, 359, calls it "Jaddi gaon" meaning "hereditary village." On p. 362, it is named as Samil-ki-Garhi. Sardesai, 555, places it in the neighbourhood of Shamli in the Muzaffarnagar district.

[4] Sarkar, III, 461-70.

[5] Festing, 170; Elliot, VIII, 254; *Dilliyethil*, I, 378, 380; *Selections from Calcutta Gazettes*, II, 212.

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CHAPTER 16

Failure of Sindhia's Sikh Policy, 1789-1794

Ghulam Qadir's mother

On hearing the news of the capture of Ghulam Qadir Khan, his mother did not consider it safe to stay at Ghausgarh. Taking her younger son Ghulam Muin-ud-din Khan *alias* Bhambu Khan with her she left for Kunjpura to find a place of safety with the Nawab. But fearing a Maratha pursuit she proceeded farther and took shelter with the Sikhs at Ambala. Later on when the Marathas came after her, she escaped towards Lahore.

In January, 1789, Sindhia wrote letters to the Sikhs, the Raja of Nahan and others to seize Ghulam Qadir's mother and Bhambu Khan and to send them to him.[1]

In April, 1790 and in January, 1791, Ghulam Qadir's mother entered the Doāb with the Sikh assistance but retired into hills for fear of the Marathas.

Sindhia asked her to restore the booty of Ghulam Qadir then in her possession. She replied: "Whatever goods I had, are in the hands of the Sikhs. I desire to secure release from them and to be present at your court; but they do not let me come. If your officers can, let them seize these goods from the Sikhs, and liberate me from their captivity."[2]

On the 18th December, 1795, it was recorded at the court of Daulat Rao Sindhia that Ghulam Qadir's mother who was staying with the Sikhs intended to come back to her country.[3]

As late as October, 1796, the British Resident at Lucknow believed that "the Begum of Zabita Khan is possessed of great

[1]Sardesai, 556.
[2]Khair-ud-din, III, 191.
[3]Ricu, I, Add. 24036, folio 5

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wealth both in money and jewels, and he suggested to the Governor-General that she should be encouraged to settle in the territory of Oudh and thus prevent her wealth from falling into the hands of their enemies."[1]

In 1796 Imam-ud-din found Bhambu Khan with Jassa Singh Ramgarhia who had granted him the revenues of five villages amounting to Rs. 7,000 a year.[2]

Bhambu Khan received a pension of Rs. 5,000 from the British Government and after his death a pension of Rs. 1,000 per mensem was granted to his two sons. Mahmud Khan and Jalal-ud-din Khan.[3]

Sindhia grants feudal tenures to the Sikhs, April, 1789

From Bamnauli Ali Bahadur was sent to Ghausgarh where he established a Maratha post. Ambaji Ingle, Rane Khan, Ali Bahadur of Banda and his brother Ghani Bahadur restored Maratha rule in the Doāb, and Ghani Bahadur was appointed the first Maratha Governor of the Saharanpur and Muzaffarnagar districts. Certain Sikhs were roaming about in the Doāb, and Ghani Bahadur was so terrified of them that in order to keep them satisfied he allowed several of their chiefs to realize *rākhi* as before.

Rane Khan and Ali Bahadur crossed the Jamuna into the Sikh country with the bulk of their army. They halted at Kunjpura and imprisoned the Nawab for sheltering Ghulam Qadir's mother. Their chief purpose was to take into alliance the Patiala Raja and other Sikh chiefs under instructions from Sindhia.

Meanwhile Baluji Ingle and Begam Samru also arrived at Kunjpura. The Sikh chiefs such as Gurdit Singh and Baghel Singh visited them, and peace negotiations between the two parties were opened.

Baghel Singh thought that the Marathas were bent upon aggression particularly in view of their recent successes. He secretly wrote letters to the trans-Satluj Sikhs for assistance against Rane Khan. These letters were intercepted by Maratha troopers. This double dealing caused anxiety in the mind of the Maratha generals. Rane Khan ordered Kashi Rao and Bala Rao to advance to Thanesar where Baj Singh waited upon them with presents from the Kaithal chief. The Maratha general himself marched to Shahabad where he

[1] N.A.I., *Foreign Department, Political Proceedings*, 28 October, 1796, no. 24.
[2] *Husain Shahi*, 240; Khuswaqt Rae, 117.
[3] Beale, 423.

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was joined by Diwan Nanumal of Patiala.

Nanumal tried to settle the Patiala tribute through Himmat Bahadur Gosain. He offered four lakhs of rupees as annual tribute and two lakhs of rupees for the expenses of the army. Rane Khan insisted on having six lakhs of tribute and two lakhs of expenses. Nanumal offered to pay this much if he would drive away about 12,000 Sikhs of the trans-Satluj, then lying encamped near the Patiala boundary.

Rane Khan at once understood that the Minister was about to invite assistance from across the Satluj. The General decided to realize money from Patiala before Nanumal could get any help. He immediately proceeded towards Patiala. But the Sikhs of the Jullundur and Bari Doābs were already in Patiala territory to oppose the Maratha advance. The Maratha advance-guard under Baluji Ingle and Kashi Rao Holkar had not advanced far when it was attacked by Tara Singh Ghaiba on the 15th April, 1789, and about 250 men were killed and wounded on both sides. This did not deter Rane Khan who marched as far as Bhunarheri [16 kms. south of Patiala]. The Sikhs of the trans-Satluj assembled near their camp and an immediate attack was expected by the Marathas.

Rane Khan consulted the Sikh chiefs in his own camp. They offered to save the entire Maratha force if he would settle terms with them on behalf of Sindhia. In consequence Baghel Singh, a chief of considerable power and influence among the Cis-Satluj Sikhs, was granted a large *jagir* in consideration of his retaining his associate chiefs in amity with the Marathas. The Sikhs on their part acknowledged the supremacy of Sindhia, and some of them "accepted the role of peaceful feudatories receiving a very substantial return for their complaisance. They undertook the fiscal management of certain *pergunnahs* in the Doāb allotted for the maintenance of Sikh contingents. In other words, feudal tenures were bestowed upon them in commutation of their claims to blackmail, an arrangement as profitable to the recipients as it was injurious to the public interests."

At this time several Sikh chiefs held estates in the Doāb. For instance Gurdit Singh of Ladwa held Jhinjhana, Kandhla and Shamli, Bhanga Singh Bidauli and Kairana, Sher Singh of Buriya Sultanpur and Rae Singh of Jagadhri Nakur. They all agreed to protect the Doāb from their own depredations and the attacks of other Sikhs. About 1,000 Sikh collectors were allowed to be

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stationed in the Doāb to realize *rākhī* from the people and the Maratha officers helped them in this business. Thus "by this course of policy, the Government gave a varnish of legality to a system of exaction that could not be wholly suppressed."

Just at this time letters came from Sindhia summoning Rane Khan immediately. The Maratha general thereupon retreated from Patiala territory and reached Panipat without any molestation. Here he left Vithoji Ingle, brother of Ambaji Ingle, in charge of the Maratha outpost with instructions to work under the guidance of Baghel Singh.[1]

Sikhs disturb Sindhia's territory, February-November, 1790

The Sikhs abided by the terms of the pact agreed to with Rane Khan for less than a year. Meanwhile Ghulam Qadir's mother was cleverly working her way. She managed to secure assistance from the Sikhs in order to recover her lost territories. In December, 1789, the Sikhs made preparations to accompany the Rohilla lady and her son to the Doāb. In February, 1790, the Sikhs assembled in a large number on the western frontier of Sindhia's territory ready to invade the Doāb. In March they ravaged the country lying between Karnal and Sonepat. In April about twelve thousand Sikhs under Karam Singh Nirmala of Shahabad crossed into the Doāb. They plundered many places such as Aligarh and Hapur and secured a large booty worth lakhs of rupees. Rae Singh of Jagadhri and Sher Singh of Buriya seized portions of the territory held by the Gujar Raja of Landhaura comprising the *parganahs* of Manglaur, Jaurasi and Jawalapur in the district of Saharanpur.[2] Ghani Bahadur kept the Sikhs quiet by allowing them to hold portions of the district in farm. Raja Ram Dayal of Landhaura, son of Nahar Singh Gujar, became the tributary of Rae Singh of Jagadhri who treated the Raja generously. "The great Goojur talookdar," says G.R.C. Williams, "was fain to temporise with his rivals, so he and the chief of Jugadree are said to have exchanged

[1]Parasnis, I, 167-75, 180, 188, 190; *Dilliyethil*, I, 335, 355-56, 365, 368, 379-80, 381, 384, 388; Maheshwar, II, 175; Sardesai, 556; Bakhtmal, 141-42; Gian Singh, 958-60; *Calcutta Review*, LXI, 1875, pp. 41-43; *Muzaffarnagar District Gazetteer*, 179-80.

[2]They were deprived of most of these possessions the following year by the new Maratha Governor, Bhairon Pant Tantiya.

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pugries[1] in token of mutual friendship."[2]

To oppose the Sikh invaders Sindhia despatched several Maratha captains. Baluji Ingle, brother of Ambaji Ingle, followed by Tukoji Holkar advanced from Delhi. Vithoji Ingle and Kashi Rao Holkar with 5,000 troops came to Kunjpura. A short engagement took place between the Sikhs and Marathas, but the result was indecisive. The Sikhs afterwards considered it advisable to retire. Ghulam Qadir's mother also returned without achieving anything.

To weaken Sindhia in the north a confederacy was organised by the Rajas of Jaipur and Jodhpur. Bhambu Khan, brother of Ghulam Qadir Khan, went to Raja Bijai Singh of Jodhpur, and sought his assistance in recovering his family possessions from Sindhia. Ghazi-ud-din, Imad-ul-Mulk, an ex-Wazir of Delhi, and Prince Ahsan Bakht were at Patiala where they entered into league with Ghulam Qadir's mother. The Raja of Jaipur intrigued with Ismail Beg whom he advised to win over Diwan Nanumal against Sindhia.

Matters were yet at this stage when the Dallewalia Sikhs attacked Patiala territory in May, 1790. Nanumal had to seek assistance from Sindhia, and sent his son to wait upon him. Sindhia despatched Devji Gavle and Bapuji Malhar at the head of a force. About the end of May they reached Sonepat where they plundered a few villages and realized fifty thousand rupees as tribute. The Maratha generals halted at Panipat and refrained from marching into the heart of the Sikh country.

The Sikhs seized this opportunity to overawe them further. In August a small body of only five hundred Sikhs crossed into the Doāb, and commenced their depredations.

Sindhia sent Begam Samru to Panipat to join the two Maratha commanders, while Ravloji Sindhia was ordered to proceed to the Doāb.

[1]When two men intend to become sworn-brothers to each other, they hold an entertainment at the end of which they exchange turbans in the presence of their numerous relatives and friends. Women also become sworn-sisters. At an entertainment they bring plateful of almonds or pistachios which they break and eat in common. When one of them comes across a shell containing a double fruit, it is divided and eaten by them with certain ceremonies, and from that moment these women become sisters. (*Seir*, I, 37 fn.)

[2]*Calcutta Review*, LXI, 1875, p. 42. "Their families continued to interchange traditional courtesies until after the death of Ranee Sukhun, wife of Bhugwan Singh, the Sirdar's adopted son."

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The *vakils* of Karam Singh and Baghel Singh attended Mahadji and asked for more grants of land in the Doāb promising to maintain peace and order in that quarter. Sindhia held out some hope to them, and detained them in his camp.

Bapuji Malhar and Devji Gavle could not maintain their position at Panipat. In October they crossed over into the Doāb and set up their head-quarters at Bidauli (24 kms north-east of Panipat). But the Sikhs were not going to give them rest. Bhanga Singh, Karam Singh and others at the head of about 8,000 troops crossed the Jamuna, and plundered the country extending from Ghausgarh to Meerut. "The Sikhs and Gujars in collusion," says a Marathi despatch of November, 1790, "are creating havoc in the Upper Ganga Doāb. Travelling has become extremely difficult. The city of Delhi is threatened by thieves at night."[1]

Mahadji Sindhia was very much perturbed at these disturbances. He despatched Gopal Rao Raghunath to Delhi to control his northern possessions. In December Gopal Rao sent Madho Rao Phalke with 4,000 troops to the Doāb to expel the Sikhs. The Sikhs after realizing *rākhi* from certain places went back to their country.[2]

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Rane Khan invited by the Patiala Minister, December, 1790

At this time Patiala was again attacked by some Sikh chiefs of the neighbourhood. The Patiala Government felt its inability to repel the invasion without external aid. Rane Khan, the famous Maratha general, was in the Doāb. Nanumal, the Chief Minister of Patiala, invited his assistance. Rane Khan crossed the Jamuna and halted at Thanesar for twenty days. Baj Singh, the *vakil* of the Kaithal chief, waited upon him and presented him with gifts on behalf of his master. Bhanga Singh and his brother Bhag Singh who had refused to pay to Rane Khan a large sum of tribute demanded by him left Thanesar, and encamped 5 kms distant from the Maratha camp. They frequently attacked his baggage and storehouse, and everyday carried off some elephants, camels and horses. The Sikhs plundered his supplies, and compelled Rane Khan to leave the

[1] *Dilliyethil*, II, 41.

[2] Parasnis, I, 226; *Dilliyethil*, II, 2, 13, 41, 47; II, *Additional*, 21, 23, 25, 30, 35, 41, 45, 47; Maheshwar, II, 199-200; Sardesai, 570, 71; *Muzaffarnagar District Gazetteer*, 179-80; *Saharanpur District Gazetteer*, 194.

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place. He proceeded to Jhansa (23 kms north-west); but was attacked on the way by Bhanga Singh at the head of three hundred horse, and deprived of three elephants, eight horses and some baggage.

Meanwhile the Sikhs had retired from Patiala territory, and Nanumal had no use for the Maratha general. He now wished him to go back; but this was not possible until some money was offered to him. To find money was a problem for the minister as the treasury had been drained by the late wars and the subjects had already been fleeced to their maximum capacity.

In this emergency he was advised by his *munshis*, Kirpa Ram and Teju, to get money from a certain family, and then wait upon Rane Khan. Nanumal liked the idea, advised Raja Sahib Singh to retire to Munak, and himself visited the Maratha camp. There he rendered great service to Rane Khan by giving him information as to the financial resources of each Sikh chief and the amount of tribute they could pay.

Last of all came the turn of the Patiala tribute. Nanumal promised to pay six lakhs of rupees after realizing this sum from Saifabad. He was allowed leave the camp to enable him to arrange for money. Nanumal went straight to Saifabad, and asked Gulab Kali, a mistress of late Raja Amar Singh, who was residing in the fort, for money. The woman turned down his request and got ready to fight. At the minister's suggestion the Marathas besieged the place. Gulab Kali offered stout resistance, and when her ammunition stores were exhausted, she used silver bullets by melting rupees.

In the meantime the Maratha troops were laying waste the Patiala territory. Bibi Rajindar Kaur, a lady of great ability, daughter of Raja Bhumia Singh, and a cousin of Raja Amar Singh, could not tolerate the ruin of her subjects resulting from this warfare. At the head of a military guard she left Patiala, and came to Suhlar (3 kms. from Patiala), where Rane Khan was halting. She induced the Maratha General to retire promising to pay the tribute after personally settling the amount of it with Mahadji Sindhia who was encamped at Mathura.

Rane Khan agreed and taking Bibi Rajindar, Diwan Nanumal, his son Devi Ditta and Rae Ahmad of Jagraon marched backward. Rae Ahmad managed to escape at Panipat, while Nanumal persuaded Rane Khan to spare him in order to enable him to raise funds.

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Rane Khan left only with Bibi Rajindar and Devi Ditta came to Mathura, where the Bibi was respectfully treated and allowed to depart on receipt of one lakh of rupees, Devi Ditta being detained in the camp as a surety for the balance.[1]

No sooner had Rane Khan turned his back upon the Sikh territory than a strong Sikh force under the leadership of Karam Singh Nirmala gathered on the western bank of the Jamuna. About the middle of December, 1790 they crossed the river Jamuna and spread all over the upper Ganga Doāb in small bodies. Ghulam Qadir's mother also accompanied them, and with the Sikh assistance seized four or five military posts. On the 5th February, 1791, a contemporary writer recorded. "The Sikhs plunder this country of crores of rupees."[2]

Mahadji Sindhia sent Bhairon Pant Tantiya, with two infantry regiments, 2,000 horse and a park of artillery. Devji Gavle and Bapuji Malhar with a force of 8,000 advanced from Saharanpur to oppose them. Bhairon Pant crossed the Jamuna opposite Sonepat on the 14th February, 1791, and proceeded towards the Sikhs. In the rear Ravloji Sindhia marched from Hathras. The Sikhs were thus going to be surrounded by three Maratha forces on the left, in front and on the right, while on the other side there was the territory of the Nawab of Oudh strongly defended by British troops.

The Sikhs realized the delicacy of their situation. They retreated towards the Jamuna. At this time Bhairon Pant was at Kutana and Devji Gavle at Kairana, only 32 kms. apart from each other. The Sikhs were laden with booty and were in no mood to engage themselves in a fight with the Marathas. Consequently, they advanced to Chhaprauli (13 kms. north of Kutana and 20 kms. south of Kairana), and quietly crossed over the Jamuna into their own country, with hundreds of bullocks, buffaloes and horses.

Devji Gavle proposed a *jagir* for Karam Singh Nirmala, their leader, in order to put a stop to their future incursions. Peace negotiations continued for some time in view of the fact that Sindhia was not free to pay personal attention to the Sikh problem. "I do not think," wrote Palmer, Resident with Sindhia, to Malet

[1]Bakhtmal, 142-46; Bute Shah, 287a-b, 294b; *The Rajas of the Punjab*, 62-64; Muhammad Hasan, 142-46; *Raj Khalsa*, II, 37-38; *Punjab States Gazetteers*, XVII, A, 47.

[2]Khair-ud-din, III, 256.

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in a letter dated Agra, 28th April, 1791, "that Sindia will make any attempt against the Sikhs this season, or at most more than a feint of attacking them to prevent their incursions into Doāb."

Nothing came of these negotiations, and Devji Gavle and Bapuji Malhar took up their position at Panipat.[1]

Longcroft, indigo planter, attacked by the Sikhs, December, 1790

Small parties of the Sikhs were roaming about everywhere. A band of three hundred Sikhs appeared one afternoon about the end of December, 1790 in the village Jalauli in Aligarh district. At this place an Englishman named Mr. Longcroft, an indigo planter, who manufactured about 2,000 quintals of indigo per year, lived in a castle. The Sikhs entered the village and made towards the Englishman's house. The villagers, who were greatly attached to Mr. Longcroft, came out to block their passage. They fought bravely, retreated slowly towards the main street at the head of which they succeeded in arresting the progress of the invaders.

At this place the fighting reached a desperate stage and many persons were killed on both sides. The Sikhs were, however, gaining the advantage. Seeing this, one of the villagers, who was fighting in the front ranks, carefully marked the leader of the Sikhs. He then left his companions, crossed the street by passing over houses and came up behind the Sikhs. Cleverly he managed to reach the Sikh commander, and speared him in the back. The Sikhs were dismayed by the fall of their leader, and retraced their steps down the street. Mr. Longcroft who had been watching the scene of action through the window of his castle thus escaped unhurt.

From the end of the street the Sikhs turned to the right, galloped off by the back side of Mr. Longcroft's house, and passed close to his indigo works without inflicting any injury. From Jalauli they marched northward along the western bank of the Ganga and reached Anupshahar, a military post of the English.[2]

Thomas Twining who travelled across the Ganga Doāb in 1794, heard this account from Mr. Longcroft himself. He did not come across any Sikh plunderer, and so called them "Pindarries, a third tribe of robbers," the other two being the Gujars and the Mewatis.

[1] *Dilliyethil*, II, *Additional*, 9-10, 21; Parasnis, I, 269, 277; *P.R.C.*, I, 266.
[2] Twining, 289-90.

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Lieutenant-Colonel Stuart in Sikh captivity, 3rd January to 24th October, 1791

Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Stuart[1] was the commander of a detachment of British troops stationed at Anupshahar (40 kms east of Bulandshahar) on the Ganga to guard the fords leading from the Maratha country in the Doāb into the territory of the Nawab Wazir of Oudh, an ally of the British Government, whose dominions served as a buffer state in those days.

On this occasion when the Sikhs were wandering at large in the Doāb, a party of them having joined the one coming from Jalauli, all numbering about 1,000 men,[2] under the leadership of Bhanga Singh, the chief of Thanesar in Karnal district, appeared on the Ganga. They as a rule concentrated their attention on the Maratha country alone plundering two or three villages only belonging to the Wazir.[3] The Governor-General expressed his gratification ta the abstention of the Sikhs from extending depredations to the Wazir's territory.[4]

Clear instructions had been issued to Colonel Stuart not to provoke the Sikhs in any manner whatsoever, and the same desire was conveyed to the Nawab Wazir of Oudh:

"Colonel Stuart will be careful that the Seiks hovering about his station shall receive no provocation or pretence from the conduct of the troops under his command to extend their incursions from the Marhatta districts to those of your Excellency, and he will observe such spirit of forbearance towards them as shall be consistent with the object of defending your Excellency's frontier against their inroads. The expediency of your Excellency's servants and subjects in that quarter carrying themselves towards these people in the same prudent manner is so obvious that I have no doubt of your Excellency's having instructed them long before this to that effect."[5]

Early in January, 1791, they lay encamped in the close neighbourhood of Anupshahar and extracted a large sum of money

[1]Robert Stuart of the Bengal Army: Cadet, 1764; Lieutenant, 1765; Captain, 1770; Major, 1781; Lieutenant Colonel, 1785; Colonel and Major General, 1796, died on 18 February, 1820 at Perth. In those days all ranks upto Lt. Colonel in British Army were bought and sold.

[2]*Dilliyethil*, II, *Additional*, 20. [3]*P.R.C.*, I, 375.

[4]N.A.I., *Foreign Miscellaneous*, no. 46, C. Stuart, Secretary to the Governor-General, to the Resident at Lucknow, dated 4 February, 1791.

[5]ibid, *Persian Correspondence*, Letters Written dated 14 January, 1791.

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from the Raja of Anupshahar. In the morning of the 3rd January they heard that an Englishman was outriding alone, when he was captured by a band of robbers numbering about 60 horse and foot. Some of the daring Sikh youths out of mere adventure fell upon the robbers and seized the prisoner. It was Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Stuart.

The Colonel tried to hide his identity, but the Sikhs not caring for his name and rank decided to take him to the Panjab for the thrill of keeping an Englishman in their captivity and the temptation of receiving a good ransom. The Colonel's assistant, Captain Breadley, on learning the sad news detached two companies to endeavour a rescue. The Sikhs came up in large bodies, and a smart firing took place. Finding the fierce fight raging, the Captain at the head of the rest of the detachment marched out to reinforce his troops; but on his approach the Sikhs immediately made off with the Colonel. They could not be pursued for want of a cavalry force, and besides, the Sikhs had reached by this time the borders of the Maratha districts into which the British troops could not be led without the previous sanction of Mahadji Sindhia, the chief of that territory.

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The Sikhs moved to Aurangabad (32 kms north-west). Colonel Stuart despaired of his life, and managed to write a letter to Breadley asking him to put pressure upon Nawab Faizullah Khan of Rampur to secure his release through the intercession of northern Rohilla chiefs of Muzaffarnagar and Saharanpur districts.[1]

The Colonel was well treated by the Sikhs, and they held out hopes of enlargement to him, but they daily retreated towards their country, plundering all the way, and by the 10th January were nearly 160 kms from Anupshahar. Bhanga Singh crossed over the Jamuna, and kept Colonel Stuart in the fort of Thanesar.[2]

The Nawab Wazir of Oudh was in favour of immediate despatch of a force against the Sikhs, and pursuing them into the Maratha territory. He suggested that course not only to secure the release of Colonel Stuart but also in revenge for the insult of taking him and for the damage they had done to his district. In support of this measure he urged that forbearance to pursue them would en-

[1]ibid, *Political Proceedings,* 21 January, 1791, no. 5, Captain Breadley to Edward Otto Ives, dated at Anupshahar, 4 January, 1791.

[2]ibid, no. 11, Colonel White commanding at Fatahgarh, dated 10 January, 1791.

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courage the Sikhs to raid his country more frequently. Edward Otto Ives, the British Resident, had two objections to this course. Firstly, there was the fear of giving offence to Sindhia, though he expected that Major Palmer, the British Resident at his court, would easily get over that difficulty. Secondly, there was the danger "of irritating the Sikhs, so as to convert what are now only incidental and partial incursions for plunder, into a settled enmity and systematic desire to distress his Excellency's country."[1] Edward Otto Ives instructed Muhammad Jafar Khan, the commander in Rohilkhand to persuade Rae Singh of Jagadhri to exert pressure on Bhanga Singh to release the Colonel. Bhanga Singh did not listen to him.

The matter was then referred to the Governor-General who knowing well the past history of the Sikhs believed that any provocation from the British troops "to those freebooters might, however slight, have the effect of inducing them to extend their depredations from the Marhatta districts to those of his Excellency's, although they should not previously have entertained any such hostile designs."[2] He consequently advised no operations against the Sikhs with the exception of strengthening the British outposts on the frontier.

"The Board were sorry to learn from Captain Breadley's letter to the commanding officer at Fatteh Ghurr that the Seiks had so suddenly departed from that forbearance and delicacy towards the Vizier's dominions and subjects which they had so lately the pleasure to understand had marked the conduct of those freebooters in their approach to his Excellency's frontier. Their concern on this occasion has been considerably heightened by the untoward circumstance of Lieutenant-Colonel Stuart's having fallen into the enemy's hands.

"Anxious as the Board are for the security and tranquillity of his Excellency's dominions and determined as they also are to maintain those objects by every means in their power, they nevertheless think the strong operations suggested to you by the Minister would but conduce to the attainment of such desirable ends. They were accordingly pleased to find that you had resisted Hyder

[1]ibid, 17 January, 1791, no. 4, Otto Ives to Lord Cornwallis, dated at Lucknow, 8 January, 1791.

[2]ibid, no. 3, C. Stuart to Edward Otto Ives, dated at Fort William, 13 January, 1791.

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Baig's insistence to this effect; and much approved of the prudence and caution which governed you on that occasion.

* * * *

"The Board are hopeful that this new disposition of the troops in your quarter will meet the wishes of the Vizier and Minister and effectually answer the purpose of protecting the dominions of his Excellency from the future inroads of this irregular enemy who is on no account to be sought or followed beyond the boundary of his Excellency's country.

* * * *

"The Board rely on the same prudence which guided you under the circumstances already noticed in the former part of this letter for your restraining the court at which you reside from plunging into avoidable hostilities or difficulties, and for your inculcating on every occasion in your correspondence with Colonel Eyres the propriety of his observing the same cautious conduct."[1]

This policy was further advocated:

"It is decidedly our opinion that you should discourage every proposition that may be thought of with respect to a junction of the Company's and Mahratta troops to repel or chastise these people."[2]

The British position at Anupshahar and other places was considerably strengthened. The force at Anupshahar now consisted of the 2nd Regiment of cavalry, a company of artillery, and four battalions of sepoys with a suitable proportion of field ordnance and three companies of 3rd European battalions. Besides, 700 Kandhar horses and a number of elephants were to be provided by the Wazir to reinforce the forces at Anupshahar. Two battalions of sepoys were left for the protection of the cantonment at Fatahgarh; while the greater part of the European battalion, the artillery company, and one battalion of Indian infantry were stationed at Kanpur. The commanding officer at Chunar was instructed to send forward to Kanpur one or two battalions from his station on the requisition of the Resident at Lucknow.[3]

The Nawab Wazir of Oudh and Edward Otto Ives, the British Resident at Lucknow, both tried to gain their end by diplomatic

[1]ibid, *Foreign Miscellaneous*, no. 46.
[2]ibid, dated 21 January, 1791.
[3]ibid, C. Stuart to Otto Edward Ives, dated at Fort William, 17 January, 1791

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means. They wrote friendly letters to Bhanga Singh, and attempted to give him an impression that the Sardar was not at all responsible for the Colonel's capture, but he was apprehended by a party of straggling Sikhs. They stated that they were glad as the Colonel was with him and he was well treated by him. It was their hope that the Colonel must have been set at liberty long before this letter reached him, promising that they would inform the Governor-General of his friendly behaviour towards the Colonel. Bhanga Singh's reply was couched in the same diplomatic language. He made professions of friendship, but did not mention a word about restoring the Colonel to liberty.[1]

Along with Bhanga Singh's reply Colonel Stuart sent a letter to Edward Otto Ives. He stated that Bhanga Singh was a self-willed person who ruled rather than submitted to the opinion of others. Bhanga Singh called Stuart the assassin of Shuja-ud-daulah, the late Nawab of Oudh, and said that he would realize a large sum of money from him for his blood. "Were you acquainted with the licentious barbarity of this people, you would readily conceive the situation of hazard I have hitherto been in."

He suggested that the reply from the Wazir and the Resident should be "not only civil but friendly, and his Excellency ought also to send him some presents," because "no other mode I assure you will effect any good purpose." About Bhanga Singh he wrote, "At present I am in a good deal of favour with the chief, but he is very unsteady, and though not outwardly violent is very implacable, he is by much the best soldier and officer amongst them." He further added that if "Bhanga Singh is on this occasion conciliated, much benefit may be derived from my accident in supplying ourselves and the Wazir with horses for cavalry to any amount should this be any object either to ours or to his Excellency's Government. You have only to procure me letters of credit on Patealah, Saheb Singh's capital, with letters to Saheb Singh from the Wazir, and from our Government to enable me to procure any number of excellent cavalry horses that may be wanted." In the end he requested the Resident for a letter of credit on some respectable person at Thanesar for cash that he might require for private expenses.[2]

[1]ibid, *Political Proceedings*, 13 February, 1791, no. 3.

[2]ibid, 18 February, 1791, no. 4. Bute Shah on folio 253b writes about Bhanga Singh: "Bhanga Singh was most notorious in pillage and devastation and was unrivalled in sedition and contumacy. He laid waste a large number of cities and villages, and people suffered much at his hands."

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Edward Otto Ives in consequence of the Colonel's request procured for him a letter of credit on Patiala and a bill of exchange for Rs. 1,000 on Thanesar.[1]

It appeared almost certain that Bhanga Singh would not release the Colonel without a ransom; but the Grovernor-General was not prepared to humiliate himself by adopting this course. In a letter to the Resident he stated:

"The Board had never prior to the receipt of your letter of the 20th ultimo (February) entertained a doubt of your having done all that was incumbent on you towards effecting the enlargement of Colonel Stuart; and are perfectly satisfied with the exertions which you have hitherto made for that purpose. It must not be understood, however, that it is their intention to take any part in the negotiation for ransoming Colonel Stuart, since that proceeding which is not perhaps altogether unexplainable (however well meant) even as a private transaction, would as a measure of Government be liable to very weighty objections."[2]

The Governor-General, however, wrote a very friendly letter, dated the 7th March, 1791, to Bhanga Singh for the purpose of securing the Colonel's release:

"When it was reported to the Council about two months ago that a gentleman of the Company's service had been forcibly carried off by a party of Seiks from the station of Anupshahr, and when this Government was in consequence urged to resent the insult thus apparently offered to it in the person of one of its officers, I mitting such an act of violence against the subject of a state between which and his nation there had always subsisted the most friendly intercourse that I did not hesitate to believe that there was some misunderstanding in the affair which a short time would clear up, at once to our satisfaction and to the credit of the Seik nation.

"Accordingly I soon had the pleasure to learn that Mr. Stuart had not been seized by a party of Seiks but by a roving banditti, whose object was merely plunder, and out of whose hands you very kindly rescued him. On receiving this account I no longer doubted that you would take an early opportunity of sending him

[1]N A.I., *Political Proceeding*, 18 February, 1797, no. 3.

[2]ibid, *Foreign Miscellaneous*, no. 46, C. Stuart to the Resident at Luknow, dated Fort William, 7 March, 1791.

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back in safety to his station, and am still persuaded that you would have done so had not circumstances made it necessary for you to proceed immediately to Thanasher and of course to take Mr Stuart along with you.

"Since your return to Thanasher I have had the satisfaction of seeing two or three letters from Mr. Stuart being testimony to your friendly treatment of him Stuart's report of your behaviour towards him is the more pleasing to me as it proves that I was right in the opinion I formed at first of this affairs, and as it is altogether agreeable to the character of the Seik nation, it is indeed, desirable that all neighbouring states should maintain a good understanding with one another, and it is on this principle that the English Government is particularly attentive to the security and ease of those Seiks living under its protection at Patna, and other places in the English territories, a fact which you will no doubt have learned from many of your nation.

"It is now necessary to the perfection of the friendship, which has so long subsisted between us and which it is the sincere desire of this Government should not be interrupted, that you send Mr. Stuart back to his station, or to Delhi, as may best suit your convenience, under a proper escort. By so doing you will increase the good-will we bear you, and defend your reputation as a soldier endowed with foresight and qualified to manage affairs of consequence.

"Understanding that your country breed of horses is very fine and our Government occasionally wanting some to mount their cavalry, I could wish you to charge Mr. Stuart (when you dismiss him) with your opinion as to the practicability of our supplying ourselves from your quarter to the end that if the measure be agreeable to you proper terms may be negotiated for that purpose between us."[1]

At the suggestion of Nawab Wazir of Oudh, Rae Singh, the chief of Buriya, was engaged to persuade Bhanga Singh, to release the Colonel, and he told Rae Singh in plain words that "he will not release the Colonel without a ransom; that the Sikhs fear no human being, and that he does not wise to receive any further application from him (Roy Singh) unless he can settle about the money."[2]

[1]ibid, *Persian Correspondence Letters Written*, no. 38.

[2]ibid, *Political Proceedings*, 13 May, 1791, no. 1, Edward Otto Ives to Earl Cornwallis, dated at Lucknow, 4 May, 1791.

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Jafar Khan, the commandant at Daranagar, had warned Bhanga Singh against incurring the displeasure of the British Government. Bhanga Singh's reply to it is also found in his letter to the Secretary to the Governor-General, stating that he hoped to return to Doāb very soon.

Bhanga Singh's letter which was received on the 14th May, 1971, ran as follows:

"Your favour arrived at a happy time, filled me with delight, and changed the pain of absence to pleasure; as to what was written by your friendly pen in manifestation of unanimity and concord, in truth this is not confined to writing. I was convinced of it before you wrote with regard to the wickedness and villainy of Tippoo Naik, who being elated with pride and haughtiness turned from the path of obedience and aliegiance to the English and raised the head of rebellion. What was written concerning the extirpation of that source of disturbance appears highly proper, no doubt he will receive the reward of his ill-deeds.

"The standards of Khalsa Jeu (the Seiks) are conjointly erected in the Hill country for the punishment of the Hill people. It is probable that in a short time the object of the Khalsa Jeu will be completed by the successful termination of the contests with that seditious people and the Khalsa Jeu very quickly return to the Doāb. As to what you write about the release of Colonel Stuart all points have been explained to Roy Singh. You will no doubt be particularly informed on the subject by letter from him. I trust that till the time of meeting, you will continue to fill the cup of desire with the effusions of your friendly pen which will be the means of increasing our friendship."[1]

The reply of Bhanga Singh deeply disappointed all those concerned in the Colonel's release. Jafar Khan suggested armed hostilities. He thought he could win over the Nawab of Kunjpura and the neighbouring hill rajas to the side of the British and he also expected to secure assistance from certain Sikh chiefs against Bhanga Singh. One man at least was won over. It was Jail Singh Nanga who got this nom de plume as he wore only a turban and shorts and in winter covered himself by a loose sheet. He served the Colonel very faithfully.[2] Nawab Muhammad Gulsher Khan of Kunjpura also helped the Colonel by providing him with money

[1]ibid, *Political Proceedings*, 13, May, 1791, no. 2.

[2]Sarup Lal, 72.

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secretly.[1] Rae Singh on the other hand proposed that the fort of Kunjpura with all the property therin should be handed over to Bhanga Singh in return for the Colonel's enlargement. Failing this he recommended a scheme of bribing some of the *zamindars* in the neighbourhood who would effect the Colonel's release from the fort of Thanesar when Bhanga Singh was away to the hills on a campaign. But on further deliberation these plans were not considered feasible of execution.[2]

Edward Otto Ives in a letter to C.W. Malet, Resident at Poona dated Lucknow, the 12th May, 1791, stated that he was convinced ransom was the only means by which the Colonel could be released:

"As we are not at war with this race of freebooters (though they sometimes plunder such part of His Excellency's territories as lie in their way), we were in hopes at first that they would have released the Colonel as soon as they knew who he was. But Bhanga Singh, the petty chief, who has him in his possession, though applied to by the Honourable Mr. Stuart and the Vizier, has refused to enlarge him without a ransom which our Government cannot think of consenting to. The poor Colonel is shut up in the fort of Thaneshwar and has lately been very ill. It is a most awakward circumstance on all account and I fear the only way of the Colonel's recovering his freedom is paying his own ransom if Bhanga Singh can be brought to accept of anything reasonable."[3]

On the 1st July, 1791, it was again reported by a Maratha agent that the Nawab Wazir of Oudh had written to Sindhia for assistance in order to secure the release of *Frangi*.[4]

Bhanga Singh ultimately had his own way. He was offered Rs. 20,000 to release the Colonel; but the Sikh chief demanded one lakh of rupees. In the end Rs. 60,000 were paid to him through Begam Samru, and the Colonel was set free on the 24th October 1791. The Colonel was taken to Kunjpura where he stayed for a while with Nawab Muhammad Gulsher. From there Begam Samru conducted him to Sardhana. Then he went to Delhi. Four English officers and a company of soldiers were sent from Anupshahar to Delhi to bring the Colonel. Shah Alam II, the Mughal

[1]ibid, 272.
[2]N.A.I., *Political Proceedings*, 13 May, 1791, no. 1.
[3]*P.R.C.*, I, 375.
[4]*Dilliyethil*, II, 63.

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Emperor, granted them audience on the 23rd November, 1791. The Colonel and the other officers paid a *nazar* of 11 gold *mohurs* and in return received robes of honour[1].

Proposed Maratha expedition to Patiala, May-August, 1791

The Maratha commanders at Panipat were hard up for money, and with the approval of Mahadji they proposed an expedition to Patiala to realize arrears of tribute.[2] They wrote to the Raja of Patiala who deputed Diwan Nanumal and Rani Rajindar to Panipat to settle terms. The tribute was fixed at eight lakhs of rupees. As one lakh and sixty thousand rupees had already been paid to Rane Khan, Devji and Bapuji demanded the balance. Nanumal asked for leave to go to Patiala and arrange for money. Himmat Bahadur Gosain opposed his departure declaring that Nanumal was a cunning fellow (harāmi daghā bāz) and money would not be recovered if he were permitted to leave the camp. Raja Sahib Singh also sent a message that if Nanumal and Rajindar Rani were sent back, the arrears of tribute would be immediately paid off. The Marathas, however, did not trust them, and imprisoned both the Patiala representatives.[3]

This worsened the situation. The Sikhs bagan to collect troups in large members. Besides, Mahadji Sindhia was suspicious about the Patiala Raja's move in this matter. On the 18th June he ordered Gopal Rao Raghunath to set up his head-quarters at Delhi and to control the affairs of the Doāb and the imperial capital. Ravloji Sindhia, Jiva Dada Bakshi, and De Boigne were to proceed to the country of the Sikhs.[4]

In July Devji Gavle and Bhairon Pant came to Delhi to take orders from Gopal Rao Raghunath, Devji was sent back to Panipat,

[1]ibid, 28, 39, 63; *Additional*, 20; Twining, 290. Edward Otto Ives in a letter to the Governor-General stated: "From these it appears that Bhanga Singh has declared his determination, from which he has sworn not to depart, not to release the Colonel without a ransom of Rs. 60,000". N.A.I., *Political Proceedings*, 9 March, 1791, no. 25. *P.R.C.*, I, 375, in a footnote, wrongly states that the Colonel was released for a ransom of Rs. 15,000, cf Bakhtmal, 147.

[2]Khair-ud-din, III, 265, states that in this affair Mahadji Sindhia was told by Rane Khan that the Sikhs were causing loss of crores of rupees in the Doāb, and they must be punished.

[3]*Dilliyethil*, II, 12, 14.

[4]ibid, 16, 59, 61.

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and Bhairon Pant to Mathura. It was proposed that a force of ten thousand should be sent against the Sikhs. The Nawab of Oudh also volunteered his assistance to Sindhia in crushing the Sikhs, and offered a few regiments from the troops stationed at Anupshahar to be placed at his disposal The situation seemed favourable for Sindhia as the Sikhs were not united. W. Palmer in a letter dated Agra, the 8th July, 1791 to C.W. Malet wrote: "The Sikhs are divided and at war amongst themselves." The Sikhs had also withdrawn themselves from the Doāb to their own homes, though certain Sikh merchants were carrying on trade in different places. Edward Otto Ives, the Resident at. Lucknow, on the 24th July, 1791, wrote to C.W. Malet; "None of the Sikh *Sardars* being now in neighbourhood of the Vizier's territories, the plan you have suggested could not be executed. There are Sikh merchants both in the Vizier's country and ours, but I should fear their Government is too relaxed to care much what becomes of the merchants: but at any rate no one would venture to undertake such a business without the sanction of our Goverment".

But this proposal did not materialize. Neither Sindhia was free to devote his whole-hearted attention to the Sikh affair nor could the Nawab of Oudh join Sindhia without the approval of the English who were not in favour of such a scheme. Besides, there was always the terror of the trans-Satluj Sikhs, though they seldom interfered with the Marathas.

The Maratha generals were hesitating to lead the expedition without any immediate cause. They postponed it first to the Dasahra day, later on to the Diwali day, and afterwards completely gave it up. Both the Patiala personages were set free with a view to maintain amicable relations with the premier Sikh state in the Cis-Satluj.

Nawab Ghazi-ud-din Khan and Prince Ahsan Bakht were moving sometimes in the territory of the Raja of Nahan and sometimes in the Patiala state. Shah Alam II, against whom both were in revolt, wrote in August to the Raja of Nahan and Raja Sahib Singh to expel them from their country. His orders were immediately carried out and both the persons made for Afghanistan.

Gulsher Khan, the Pathan chief of Kunjpura, was attacked by a body of Sikhs in August, 1971; but they were repulsed with some loss in killed and wounded.[1]

[1]ibid, 5, 32, 35, 63, 64; *P.R.C.*, I, 269, 273.

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Sikh raid into Ganga Doāb, January-March, 1792.

The Sikhs were closely watching the Maratha commanders' movements, and knowing that they lacked in pluck, they decided to invade the Doāb. Early in January, 1792, a body of 5,000 Sikhs made preparations to raid the upper Ganga Doāb. A batch of two thousand of them crossed the Jamuna first and got busy in their predatory deeds. The others soon followed suit. Devji Gavle stationed in the Doāb immediatly repaired to Mathura and waited on Gopal Rao Raghunath, Sindhia's Governor of nothern provinces. Gopal Rao sent reinforcement to Sadashiv Malhar, the Maratha '*amil* of Ghausgarh, and himself marched from Mathura for the double propose of checking the incursion of the Sikhs and of supporting Appa Khande Rao Hari in the siege of Kanaud (50 kms west of Rewari). The Maratha force produced no effect on the Sikhs: who extended their depredations to the very gates of Delhi. A Marathi despatch of the 22nd February from Delhi say: "The Sikhs have blocked the highways as far as Shahdara, one *kos* distant from Delhi. They realize *rākhi* on all sides and are ravaging the villages. The Gujars and Sikhs have no check on themselves". On Gopal Rao's sending further reinforcements, and himself marching to Delhi the Sikhs retraced their steps homeward early in March, 1792. Later on Ravloji, Sindhia and Madho Rao Phalke were also appointed in the Doāb to keep themselves ready to oppose any future inroad of the Sikhs The Maratha advance aginst the Sikhs gave satisfaction to Edward Otto Ives, the British Resident at Lucknow. In a letter of the 27th January, 1792, to Cornwallis he stated: "I trust therefore that there is no great probability of the Seicks penetrating fat enough into the Dooaub to give any disturbance to his Excellency's country."[1]

Gopal Rao Raghunath's march from Mathura towards Panipat January-May, 1792

Gopal Rao Raghunath left Mathura on the 5th January, 1792, and encamped two *kos* distant towards Rewari. Jiva Dada Bakhshi accompanied him The French General De Boigne also had Sindhia's orders to join Raghunath; but he delayed his departure. On the 22nd February Gopal Rao was encamped at Barsana, and De Boigne was still at Mathura. The contingent of Begam Samru

[1]Parasnis, I, 325, 379; *Dilliyethil*, II, 41; *Additional*, 54, 57, 59, 60, 71; N.A.I., *Political Proceedings*, 8 February, 1792, no. 20.

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was ordered to march to Kanaud to reinforce Appa Khande Rao. Gopal Rao Raghunath called upon Raja Sahib Singh of Patiala to help Appa Khande Rao. The Raja at once made preparations to leave at the head of a force. The Sikhs who had just returned from the Doāb did not like this policy. In a body of 20,000 they beseiged Patiala and stopped any reinforcement going to Kanaud. On the 7th March Gopal Rao was encamped near Delhi. Shah Nizam-ud-din deputed Chimnaji Pant to Gopal Rao to represent to him that his halt in the neighbourhood of the city was causing great inconvenience to the people, as his troops were destroying the crops. Gopal Rao thereupon marched to Bahadurgarh.[1] On the 13th April Gopal Rao and De Boigne halted at Kharkhauda (32 kms east of Rohtak). Devji Gavle and Bapuji Malhar who were the leaders of the Maratha advance-guard invested the village Sanghi (13 kms north of Rohtak), for having decline to pay tribute. The village which had a population of 10,000 people offered resistance, and in the fight nearly 700 persons were killed and wounded. Gopal Rao marched to the village. The *zamindars*, finding resistance useless, sought the intervention of De Boigne and paid a tribute of twenty thousand rupees. On the 17th April Gopal Rao marched from Sanghi to Sonepat. On the 23rd April the *vakils* of Karam Singh Nirmala, Bhanga Singh and Gurdit Singh waited upon Gopal Rao, and invited him to advance to Patiala. They stated that as the harvest was ready, he would be able to realize a large tribute. Gopal Rao was not prepared to advance into the heart of the Sikh country as his troops were not thoroughly obedient owing to arrears of their salary. Mahadji sent a *hundi* of two lakhs of rupees; but this sum was inadequate. Gopal Rao therefore decided to spend a couple of months on the border of the Sikh country till money arrived in the camp.[2]

The Sikhs repelled from the Doāb and the Delhi province, October-December, 1793

Nothing is known about Sikh activities for nearly a year and a half; but early in October, 1793, a body of Sikhs crossed the Jamuna and created disturbances in the country. At this time Devji

[1]Bahadurgarh is situated 30 kms west of Delhi. It was the headquarters of Bahadur Khan Baluch about the mid-eighteenth century.

[2]Parasnis, I, 1, 325, 342; *Dilliyethil* II, 83, 93, *Additional*, 54-55, 60, 68-69, 70, 74-77, 80, 82; N.A.I., *Political Proceedings*, 23 March, 1792, no. 3.

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Gavle and Bapuji Malhar were posted at Saharanpur. On the 6th October, 1793 the Maratha commanders attacked the Sikh camp in the night, wounded and killed about fifty men and seized one hundred horses. The Sikhs thereupon retired across the river towards Patiala in order to gather in larger numbers to renew the attack.

At this time Patiala was looming large in the eyes of Maratha chiefs. On the 15th September, 1793, even Ahalya Bai was advised by her counsellors—Balaji Kashi, Shivaji Gopal and Parashar Dadaji—to lead an expedition to Patiala in order to gain riches. Ahalya Bai replied: "You suggest invasion of Patiala. But do we possess the country adjoining Patiala? Who will supply us provisions? We have not got room even to put our foot."[1]

Another body of the Sikhs was ravaging the Delhi province. Khande Rao Hari was depatched to expel them; and he easily succeeded in this object. After driving away the Sikhs from the neighbourhood of Delhi he got busy in realizing tribute from various places. Early in November he visited Amir Muhammad Khan Baluch of Bahadurgarh. On the 10th November the Baluch chief agreed to pay a tribute of Rs. 15,000 and hand over pieces of cannon. He paid Rs. 7,000 in cash and for the remember made over his son as a surety. The Maratha general marched to the west realizing tribute from place to place. On the 16th December he was encamped at Dadri. He attacked the village and the villagers offered stubborn resistance. Nearly 200 Maratha troopers were killed and wounded. The *zamindars* then paid Rs 7,000 and made peace with him.[2]

Fight between Gurdit Singh and Devi Ditta, c. December, 1793

A little farther to the north a leading Sikh chief was engaged in intriguing against Devi Ditta, the son of the late Nanumal, and the administrator of Karnal district. Devi Ditta was staying in Sindhia's camp as a hostage for a certain sum of Patiala tribute. Nanumal having died on the 21st November, 1791, there were no chances of the payment of money. To Devi Ditta's good fortune the Rajputs of Meerut district under the leadership of Sham Singh revolted against the Maratha rule. Sindhia despatched Jiva Dada Bakhshi to

[1]Maheshwar, II, 242.
[2]*Dilliyethil*, II, 68, 73, 76-77.

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suppress the Rajput rising. Devi Ditta was in attendance upon the Maratha chief. In the battle at Meerut the Marathas began losing ground. Just at this moment Devi Ditta with his thirty troopers rushed into the thick of the fight, delivered a sudden assault on Sham Singh, the leader of the Rajput forces, and slew him. The Rajputs took to flight, and were completely routed.

Sindhia was so pleased with Devi Ditta's valour and daring that he not only set him free but appointed him to the charge of Karnal district with 500 Maharatha troops.

At this time Bhairon Pant Tantiya was holding the administrative charge of certain districts in the Ganga Doāb. Gurdit Singh of Ladwa who coveted the possession of Karnal instigated Bhairon Pant to dismiss Devi Ditta and to give him the district for a tribute. Mahadji Sindhia was in the Deccan, and Gopal Rao was serving as his deputy at Delhi. Devi Ditta paid no heed to Bhairon Pant's orders, and sought assistance from Gopal Rao who reprimanded Bhairon Pant. This officer and Gurdit Singh made up their mind to punish Devi Ditta. This could best be done under the circumstances by inciting a rebellion in the territory under him.

The eastern parts of Kaithal and the western parts of Karnal containing several *parganahs*[1] were known as the Nardak country. The inhabitants were Ranghars, who in those days could collect considerable numbers of their men. They were of refractory character and were in the habit of sweeping off cattle from the neighbouring places.

Devi Ditta was called upon to lead an expedition against the Ranghars, and he easily succeeded in establishing peace and order. Once when Devi Ditta went to Gharaunda to suppress a rising, Karnal was besieged by Gurdit Singh at the head of 4,000 horse. On hearing this news Devi Ditta immediately returned and reached Karnal three hours after nightfall. Gurdit Singh fled back after some resistance. Devi Ditta pursued the fugitives. At daybreak on finding Devi Ditta's men in smaller number, Gurdit Singh came to a halt, and attacked Devi Ditta. A fierce engagement lasted for nearly three hours. Ultimately Gurdit Singh gave way and retired from the field discomfited.

Some time after Devi Ditta lost his life in a fight with the

[1]These parganahs were Phasul Nedoo, Beras, Jundla, Asandh, Baree and Jhakolie (Hamilton, I, 409).

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Ranghars of Gharaunda and was succeeded by his brother Sipahi-mal, who was also killed while fighting in the *parganah* of Panipat. Karnal was thereafter seized by Bhanga Singh of Thanesar.[1]

Sindhia dies, 12th February, 1974

Mahadji Sindhia, the ablest of all the Maratha confederates, suddenly died near Poona on the 12th February, 1794, and was succeeded by Daulat Rao Sindhia. "The one man who could keep order in Hindustan was dead."[2]

Mahadji's chief object was to establish peace and order in northern India by active co-operation of the Sikhs whose fighting capacity he properly understood and appreciated. Disunited as the Sikhs were Sindhia tried to put them in one yoke under his own personal guidance, and left no stone unturned to win them over by good-will and policy of conciliation.

That Sindhia failed in his avowed object is clear; but is should hardly be regarded discreditable to him. He was dealing with a people who at this time were most intractable and least amenable to reason. Politically they were at a very immature state of development and understood neither the values of statesmanship for the tactics of diplomacy. They were young in their faith, virile in their blood, and naturally the life of adventure appealed to their imagination more than a quiet time at home.

They understood only the argument of physical force and on the basis of their bodily strength and the love of horsemanship, they made periodical incursions all over the neighbouring territory collecting money and cattle. But they sadly lacked far-sightedness and were totally ignorant of the value of treaties, promises and engagements. They only appreciated the immediate advantage and left the future to look after itself. Thus they made no friends, and created a host of enemies. They were feared and distrusted, and even among themselves bitter rivalries were constantly cropping up, and internecine wars were not unknown. They were yet a long way in building up a united nation of their own, with a definite object and outlook. With such men Sindhia could hardly achieve any measure of success. But his failure is the failure of heroes who fight against their times.

[1]Bakhtmal, 147-50; Bute Shah, 287b.

[2]Testing, 175, "The only man capable of restoring order was Sindhia". (Keene, *Hindustan Under Free Lances*, 42).

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CHAPTER 17

The Upper Ganga Doāb and Hardwar, 1794-1796

Sikhs foray across the Jamuna, February, 1794

At the time of Sindhia's death the Maratha forces in the Delhi province and the Doāb were distributed at several places. Bhairon Pant Tantiya was at Panipat, Bapuji Malhar and Devji Gavle at Saharanpur, Jivaji Balal and Ambaji Ingle at Sambhal, and Appa Khande Rao Hari who had just employed in his service George Thomas was at Jhajjar. There was a keen jealousy and rivarly between Devji Gavle and Bapuji Malhar. Shah Nizam-ud-din, Sindhia's agent, and Appa Khande Rao Hari who were in charge of Delhi province were not on good terms.

Gopal Rao Raghunath, the chief Maratha officer in the north, "Lieutenant-General of the possessions of Scindia"[1] made certain changes in the administrative posts. Bhairon Pant was transferred to Saharanpur, while Devji Gavle and Bapuji Malhar were posted at Panipat.

There were some disturbances in the troops of Bhairon Pant. He was summoned to Delhi. At this his troops openly revolted, and insisted on his clearing off their arrears of pay before departure, Bapuji Malhar and Devji Gavle were also jealous of Bhairon Pant who had superseded them at Saharanpur. They incited the *zamindars* of Saharanpur, Raja Ram Dayal Gujar and the Sikhs to molest him. [An English lady who met the Gujar Raja and his son speaks of them thus: "We passed a lasge well-built town named Jubrarah, the residence of his (Ram Dayal's) eldest son who came out to receive us at his castle gate. A more ruffin-like figure. I never beheld: he measured, I was told, seven feet in height and I can

[1] *Memoirs of Goerge Thomas*, 25.

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answer for it, that he was stout even beyond proportion...equally gigantic as his son, he possessed a stentorian voice that made one tremble. I verily thought that we had entered the country of the Brobdignagas. The Rajah's dress was no less singular than the rest of his appearance; and to crown all he had on a pair of bright yellow jack-boots."[1]

This encouraged the Sikhs greatly, and a body of them consisting of 4,000 horse immediately crossed the Jamuna to sieze Saharanpur district. But just at this time Baghel Singh, the famous Sikh chief of the Cis-Satluj country, fell ill. Besides Begam Samru on hearing of the difficulties of Bhairon Pant marched to his rescue. The Sikhs were not prepared to face the well-disciplined artillery regiment of the Begam who possessed 3,000 infantry, 150 cavalry and 24 pieces of artillery.[2] Consequently, after ravaging some parts of the district they retired to their own territory.[3]

The Sikhs offer their services to the Rohilla Chief of Rampur, October, 1974.

The hot weather and the rainy season were peacefully spent by the Sikhs; but before the rains were actually over, they received overtures from Ghulam Muhammad, the Rohilla chief of Rampur, for whom they got ready to fight against the Nawab of Oudh and the English.

By the treaty of 1774 after the Rohilla War Faizullah Khan was given as a vassal of the Nawab of Oudh a tract in Rohilkhand worth about fourteen lakh of rupees with Rampur at the seat of his government. On his death in August, 1794, he left behind him seven sons and three daughters. Muhammad Ali Khan, the eldest son, succeeded him. He was "gross and cruel and was consequently excessively disliked by the body of the people". On the other hand Ghulam Muhammad, the second son from the same mother, "was by his tribe generally beloved." He also had been the favourite of his father who constantly associated him in the important business of the state.

Intoxicated by the sense of power he had once enjoyed and goaded by ambition he intrigued against his brother, organized a

[1] *A Tour through the Upper Provinces of Hindustan*, etc. by A.D. p. 185.

[2] *Memoirs of George Thomas*, 266.

[3] *P.R.C.*, I, 206, p. 315; C.W. Malet to the Chairman of the Court of Directors dated Poona, 5 February, 1794; *Dilliyethil*, II, 4, 86-87, 109, 115, 120, 125, 131, 133, 136, 138.

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conspiracy and got him cruelly murdered. He then seized the chiefship, offered a large *nazar* to Asaf-ud-daulah, the Nawab of Oudh and requsted for the continuation of the *jagir* in his own person.

The Nawab was inclined to agree; but as the Rohilla estate was held under British guarantee he communicated the whole affair to the British Resident at Lucknow. The Resident informed the supreme government at Calcutta, who decided not to overlook such a heinous crime, and to dispossess and punish the murderer. Sir Rober Abercrombie the commander-in-chief, was asked to undertake the expedition; while the Resident at Lucknow was instructed to co-operate with him.

Meanwhile Ghulam Muin-ud-din Khan *alias* Bhambu Khan, the younger brother of Ghulam Qadir Khan, who was living as a pensioner of the Sikhs in the Panjab, sent his agent Manik Chand to Ghulam Muhammad Khan promising to secure him the aid of 30,000 Sikhs under Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, if he would agree to pay them handsomely, Bhambu Khan also wrote to Muhammed Umar Khan the chief supporter of Ghulam Muhammad to persuade his master to accept his offer so that the Afghan rule might be maintained in Rohilkhand. "Explain also to Ghulam Muhammad Khan that i am firmly and sincerly attached to him."[1]

He also wrote a letter to Naju Khan, another great noble at the court of Rampur, to the same effect. "Attend seriously to the representations of Manik Chand which will contribute to your advantage, and cause him to be speedily sent back."

On reaching Rampur Manik Chand delivered to the Nawab the massage of Bhambu Khan and the following letter[2] from Jassa Singh Ramgarhia: "Agreeably to the desire of Ghulam Muin-ud-din Khan, Tara Singh, Khushhal Singh, Jodh Snigh Gurdit Singh, etc., and myself have engaged to serve you with zeal and sincerity. We have therefore despatched Manik Chand and made him acquainted with all particulars. Trust in his representations. I hope you will speedily send him back with your acquiescence to the proposal

[1]Bhambu Khan joined the British in their war against Sindhia and Bhonsle, and was rewarded with the grant of an extensive territory in Haryana worth three lakhs of rupees a year. He was much troubled by the refractory character of its people and the predatory excursions of the neighbouring Bhatti tribe; and shortly afterwards he gave up this jagir. (Hamilton, I, 457-8.)

[2]The translations quoted in this section are obtained from N.A.I.

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I have of favour of our Prophet. We will wait on you in company with Ghulam Muin-ud-din, and serve you faithfully with a large force. I am firmly attached to you. If you desire our services, despatch Manik Chand with what is required. We are waiting".

On ther other hand the Nawab Wazir of Oudh opened negotiations with Rae Singh, Sher Singh Karam Singh and others outwardly to secure their assistance, but in reality to counteract the efforts of Ghulam Muhammad Khan for securing Sikh help. Rae Singh and Sher Singh of Buriya wrote a long letter to him assuring him of their friendship and loyalty; but asking him to offer greater sum of money to the Sikhs than that held out by Ghulam Muhammad Khan so that they could secure their desertion from the side of the Rohilla Chief. "Although we consider your Excellency's orders, and union with the Marathas the same thing, and are ready to obey your commands; yet the other Sikhs who possess the country from the Sutlej to the Jumuna and have with them a large force have listened to the *vakils* of Ghulam Muhammed Khan who held out money to them. How can we prevent this ? Your Excellency knows that pay a soldier and he will give his life. Be pleased to reflect on this, on one side money and on the other side attachment to your Excellency." Karam Singh also readily offered his services to him on the same terms.

Bhanga Singh of Thanesar put his demand for money even more bluntly: "Prior to the receipt of your Excellency's *shukka*, the *vakil* from Ghulam Mohammad Khan had arrived and commenced their negotiations with the Sikh Khalsa. At this time your Excellency's letter arrived. Your Excellency knows the nature of the Sikhs without our describing it; that unless paid they never exert themselves for anyone. Thus in consequence of our long cemented friendship, I beg leave to trouble your Excellency that if your Excellency be inclined in conjunction with the Sikhs to punish Ghulam Muhammad Khan, be pleased to direct your ministers to do it without delay, that the expense being defrayed in a proper manner, the Sikh Khalsa may unite with you, and his punishment may be effected. If any delay takes place in the arrival of your Excellency's *vakils*, the Sikh Khalsa will act as they may think most meet. They will wait for an answer; afterwards I will inform your Excellency of what occurs."

As the Nawab Wazir of Oudh could not settle terms finally without the approval of the English, he delayed his reply to the Sikhs

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Ghulam Muhammad Khan Rohilla was on the contrary anxious to enlist their aid; but he did not possess sufficient money to pay them. Consequently he hired only ten thousand Sikh troops. A small portion of them seems to have joined him in October, 1794; but it is likely that they took no part in fighting.

In accordance with instructions received from Calcutta Sir Robert Abercrombie proceeded to Kanpur, and then to Fatahgarh where he assumed the command on the 7th October, 1794. Asaf-ud-daulah left Lucknow on the 13th October.

On the 25th October in the afternoon it was reported to the British commander-in-cheif that Ghulam Muhammad was advancing to check his progress, and had already entered the territory of the Nawab of Oudh at the head of 30,000 infantry and 4,000 horse. The battle was fought on the 26th October, and after a desperate fight the Rohillas were expelled. Nothing is on record as to the fighting to the Sikhs, and no Sikhs were taken prisoners by the British.

Sometime afterwards Ghulam Muhammad surrendered to the English. He was removed from the chiefship with prohibition from residing in Rohilkhand; and Ahmad Ali Khan, son of the murdered prince, was installed in office.[1]

Sikhs seek Nawab of Oudh's permission to visit Nanakmata, June, 1795.

Strangely enough the Sikhs did not renew their attacks in the Doāb after they had retired from Rampur, and so the winter months passed off undisturbed. William Palmer in a letter to the Governor-General dated Delhi, 7th May, 1795, wrote: "The Sikhs have made no irruptions into Doāb this season, nor is there any apprearance that they intend it. I learn indeed that they are confined to their own province by internal dissensions between some of the many chiefs of which the nation consists." But in this expectation, Palmer was to be sadly disappointed. Hardly was a month over, when a large body of the Sikhs entered the Doāb in June, 1795, and approached the banks of the Ganga. From here their leaders Jai Singh, Tara Singh and Baghel Singh, applied to Rae Shambu Nath, the '*amil* of Bareilly for permission to go on

[1] *Dilliyethil*, II, 137, 138; N.A.I. *Foreign Department, Political Proceedings*, 22 May, 1795, nos. 88, 92; Francklin, *Shah Aulum*, 216-41; *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, XXI. 183-84.

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pilgrimage to Nanakmata, situated near Bareilly ten *kos* to the east of Pili Bhit in the Nawab's dominion. The letter ran:

"Victory be to God!

"From Jai Singh, Tara Singh and Baghel Singh to Rae Shambu Nath, '*amil* of Bareilley.

"The beloved of true Guru and the favourite of God!

"God be thanked that we are quite well, and long for the good news of your health. We are all desirous of visiting Nanakmata, situated near Bareilley and Pili Bhit. Good relations have existed between the Nawab Wazir of Outh and the Sikh chiefs since the time of Nawab Safdar Jang. As you are the officer of the place under Nawab Wazir Asaf-ud-daulah, our agent Diwan Thakar Das Brahmin will wait upon you, and will inform you of everything verbally. We did not like to advance in that direction without informing you, fearing that the presence of Sikh troops might disturb the people. We therefore state that our intention is purely to pay a visit to our *Gurdawara*. But we do not want to postpone it. If you like we three chiefs alone can go to Nanakmata. We also wish to see you. What should we write more? Give leave to Thakar Das Brahmin soon, as the rainy season is approaching fast. If you are required to secure permission from the Nawab, please let us know."[1]

Shambu Nath forwarded this letter to the Nawab of Oudh. C.F. Cherry, the British Resident at Lucknow, suggested the reply to the Nawab Wazir, and this was communicated to the Sikhs. The Resident's reply "was framed on the principle of not preventing altogether the pilgrimage to Nanakmati, and of prevailing on them to postpone it until next year, when the almost constant riots in which those people are occupied among themselves might operate to set the intention aside, without giving them any cause to suspect that the Vizier was averse to their religious ceremonies, while he admits those from the Marathas and others."

The Resident forwarded a copy of his reply to Sir John Shore, the Governor-General, who took objections to his reply; "If the intelligence communicated with your letter of the 13th instant (June) had not contained information that the Sikh chiefs had a body of 20,000 horse assembled at Putcally, I should have thought the apprehension of their hostile intention, worthy of little notice

[1]N.A.I., *Persian Letters Received*, no. 263, June, 1796.

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and it is extraordinary that the *'amil* Shambu Nath should have omitted inserting this intelligence in his letter leaving the report of it to the news-writer. He strongly expresses, however, his own apprehensions.

"I still think in the highest degree improbable that the Sikhs have any serious intention to hostility against the territories of the Wazir at this advanced season of the year; but under all circumstances I approve of your letter to the commanding officer at Fatahgarh.

"I cannot, however, express my approbation of the terms of the proposed answer to the Sikh chiefs, as I fear they will understand it as a promise of future permission to perform their pilgrimage to Nanakmati, and as such permission might lead to very serious embarrassments, no invitation should have been held out to them of which they may take advantage in future.

"Considering the terms of their application, I conceive the proper answer to it, in the name of the Wazir, would have been substantially as follows: That considering the friendship which has so long subsisted between the Sikh Sardars and his Excellency, and his sincere desire to cultivate it he cannot observe without surprise that an application to pass through his territories on a pilgrimage to Nanakmati is accompanied with an express determination to proceed there at all events. That a declaration so unusual between friends must impose upon his Excellency his acquiescence to their application and at all events previous to a compliance with it, he should think it necessary to consult the English Government with which he is closely allied, and in the habit of communicating upon all occasions."

As the Ganga was flooded in June, the Sikhs did not cross the river, and shortly afterwards retired to their own country.[1]

Nana Rao expelled by the Sikhs, c. September-October, 1795

Shortly after their return from the Doāb the Sikhs were called upon to deal with a Maratha chief named Nana Rao. By this time Gopal Rao had been superseded by Lakhwa Dada in Northern India. He appointed Nana Rao to realize revenues from the Cis-Satluj Sikhs. On his arrival at Panipat he was attended by several

[1] *Ibid Foreign Department, Political Proceedings*, 17 July, 1795, no. 6; *Foreign Miscellaneous*, no. 47.

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agents of the Sikh chiefs. At Karnal he summoned Bhanga Singh of Thanesar to wait on him, and demanded a tribute of Rs. 5,000. Bhanga Singh fearlessly replied that he was a soldier and had no money to give. Nana Rao declared that the place of the soldier was in the saddle, and therefore he should abdicate his estates. Bhanga Singh thereupon left the Maratha camp.

Nana Rao then called to his head-quarters Gulsher Khan, Karam Singh Nīrmala, Gurdit Singh, Jodh Singh Kalsia and Rae Singh Bhangi. Gulsher Khan suggested to Nana Rao that he was prepared to pay Rs. 5,000 if the Maratha chief would secure him the possession of Biana (25 kms north of Karnal), a place under Bhanga Singh. Nana Rao agreed. On the receipt of the above sum he laid siege to Biana. Bhanga Singh with his nephew Mahtab Singh at the head of 1,500 troops encamped at Indri (11 kms north-west). Fighting commenced and continued for eighteen days.

To put an end to this warfare Bhanga Singh was advised to seek intercession of Gurdit Singh. Bhanga Singh went to Ladwa where he was lavishly entertained for three days. Meanwhile Gurdit Singh sent a secret message on behalf of Bhanga Singh to the officer in charge of Biana to surrender. Bhanga Singh on learning of this treachery suddenly left Ladwa and attacked the Maratha camp at Biana. Nana Rao entrusting Gulsher Khan with the siege operations marched to Thanesar to plunder Bhanga Singh's capital. Other Sikh chiefs followed in his train. Bhanga Singh boldly attacked all of them on the banks of the river Sarasvati.

Rae Singh Bhangi did not like the civil war among the Sikh chiefs at a time when the Marathas were staying in their country. He persuaded Gurdit Singh to retire from the Maratha camp. On his departure Bhanga Singh again attacked the Marathas and barred their way to Thanesar. Mahtab Singh at the head of eighty horsemen, fearlessly fell upon Nana Rao's personal guards, and put them to flight. Mādho Rao Phalke with 2,000 horse fell in pursuit of Mahtab Singh in order to save the Maratha force from destruction. This caused Mahtab Singh to flee to the camp of the other Sikh chiefs, and the Marathas managed to escape to Indri.

On Bhanga Singh's arrival at Thanesar, he was advised by the leading citizens to take his family away for the sake of safety, and to sell his stores of grain. Bhanga Singh put his family under the protection of Bhai Karam Singh, but kept his baggage and grain in the fort of Thanesar.

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The Brahmans of Thanesar approached Nana Rao requesting him to spare their city. As Nana Rao was a Brahman, he granted their wish. Nana Rao handed over Indri to Gurdit Singh and returned to Thanesar. Out of regard for his promise of safety already given to the Brahmans he appointed one infantry regiment and five hundred horse to see that nobody was molested in the town. Bhanga Singh fled and encamped 8 kms away. His grain stores fell into the hands of the Marathas who halted in Thanesar for fifteen days.

Some Sikh chiefs in the Maratha camp asked Nana Rao to entrust Thanesar to them for Rs. 5,000. Rae Singh felt upset at this proposal. He informed the Brahmans that they would be ruined by this bargain as Bhanga Singh would give the people of the place no rest. The Brahmans consequently advised Nana Rao not to accept the terms.

The Sikhs being disappointed tried to excite Lal Singh of Kaithal to claim Thanesar as it originally belonged to his family. Lal Singh knew Bhanga Singh's nature and declined to entertain this proposal. The Sikhs incited Nana Rao to demand a heavy tribute from Lal Singh whom they proclaimed to be very rich. Then they advised him to secure a large sum from Patiala.

Nana took up the hint. Setting up his own government at Thanesar he marched to Thanah (4 kms west), and sent a message to Bhai Lal Singh to pay tribute. The Bhai protested against this high-handed action. He collected his own troops, and sought assistance from Patiala. Bibi Sahib Kaur, sister of Raja Sahib Singh, a woman of remarkable generalship and diplomacy, responded to the call at the head of 2,000 troops. Bhanga Singh also followed closely on the heels of the Marathas. A foraging party of the Marathas was plundered by Bhanga Singh who killed many persons and seized about fifty horses and camels.

Nada Rao was greatly annoyed by the night attacks of the Sikhs on his camp. He also found that the strength of Bhai Lal Singh was daily increasing. His own troops were suffering from want of water and food as all supplies from Thanesar were cut off by the men of Bhanga Singh and Lal Singh. Nana's Sikh allies too got busy in laying waste the country of Thanesar and Kaithal. Nana was therefore greatly perturbed fearing treachery from the Sikhs in his camp, and he made up his mind to retreat.

At this stage Karam Singh Nirmala offered Nana Rao Rs. 5,000

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in exchange for the fort of Gumthala (40 kms east of Thanesar on the bank of the Jamuna) which belonged to Bhanga Singh. The Rao agreed and took the money. Bhanga Singh did not feel dismayed, and increased the intensity of his depredations.

Nana tried to get some money from Patiala, and despatched Gurdit Singh, Karam Singh and Bakht Singh as his agents to Raja Sahib Singh. The Raja won over Nana's agents and advised them to put the Maratha general off. He raised the strength of the army under his sister Sahib Kaur to five thousand horse. Bhanga Singh and Mahtab Singh continued their attacks on the Maratha camp.

The Sikh chiefs waited upon Nana Rao, and pretending a confused state of mind frightfully declared that the situation was growing from bad to worse every hour as the trans-Satluj Sikhs were pouring into Patiala to assist the Raja. Some other Sikh messengers also corroborated the news.

Nana was not to be taken in so easily. At the head of 12,000 picked soldiers he moved towards Patiala. Sahib Singh came out to oppose him. A fight took place on the banks of the Ghaggar in which the Sikhs were repulsed. The Marathas encamped at Tepla and the Sikhs near Rajpura. Madho Rao Phalke was the commander of the advance-guard. He had with him 2,000 horse, two pieces of cannon, and an infantry battalion. The Sikhs wanted to entice him away from the main Maratha force. So they fled backward. Madho Rao was aware of this cunning trick, and remained stuck fast to his ground.

The Sikhs thereupon returned and attacked Phalke. The fight continued till evening when the Sikhs retired to their camp. Madho Rao removed the dead from the field to the bank of the Ghaggar for cremation. The Sikhs suddenly attacked him at this place. The Maratha infantry battalion which was kept ready for an emergency, engaged the Sikhs in a close fight. The Sikhs eventually went away.

Nana Rao was tired of this useless fighting which brought him no gain. He decided to retire to Delhi, and marched back *via* Ambala, Bharog (8 kms north-east of Ambala cantonment), Dhin (25 kms eastward) and reached the Jamuna. There he recalled his men from Thanesar and arrived at Panipat. Shortly after Nana Rao was recalled by Lakhwa Dada and Madho Rao Phalke was appointed in the Doāb.[1]

[1]Bakhtmal, 151-71; George Thomas, 105.

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The Sikh invasion of the Doāb, October-November, 1795

The Sikhs did not give any rest to Nana Rao till he reached Panipat. From there a body of 5,000 Sikhs poured into the Ganga Doāb. The local militia made no stand whatsoever against the Sikhs. The Maratha garrison in Saharanpur "were scattered like chaff before the wind." They also "cut to pieces some battalions of the Mahratta troops, stationed for the defence of that province." The Maratha soldiers took refuge in the fort of Jalalabad where they were immediately besieged.

Another body of the Sikhs busied themselves in plundering the villages which did not agree to pay blackmail at once. The districts of Saharanpur and Muzaffarnagar lay entirely at their mercy as there was no opposition from local officers. At this time Daulat Rao Sindhia with eight battalions of disciplined troops was at Poona, his great general De Boigne was at Aligarh.

[De Boigne, Benoit, Count (1751-1830), a Savoyard, was born at Chambery in 1751. After holding commissions in the French and Russian armies, he came to India in 1778, and entered the East India Company's service at Madras. Later he was employed by Mahadji Sindhia whose troops he trained on western lines. Sindhia "loaded him with wealth," and after some years appointed him Commander-in-Chief of his forces. On Mahadji's death in 1794, he remained in the service of his successor Daulat Rao Sindhia.

Thomas Twining visited him at Aligarh in December, 1794. He found him living in the manner of an Indian Prince. The General was not married, but he had a seraglio of his own. On the 11th December after breakfast De Boigne introduced his son to Twining. It was a little child three or four years old, who was placed in a high chair by the side of his father. The child wore a turbaned cap, similar to the one worn by the General, a lovely shawl over the shoulders, crossing round his waist, and a pair of sandals worked with gold thread.

Just then arrived the leading citizens of the locality. They were handsomely dressed in shawls and turbans. After salaaming first the General, then his son and afterwards Twining they took their seats upon a carpet. Some of them who came for the first time presented their *nazars* first to the General, and then in smaller amounts to his son. The child touched the offering with his right hand in sign of acceptance, and the money was placed before him on the table. At the end of the ceremony there was a small heap of gold *mohurs* and

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rupees before the child, who went through this early initiation, in eastern manners very readily, receiving and answering the salutations of the persons introduced, and touching their gifts, without any kind of embarrassment." The General in the meantime went on smoking his *chillum*.

De Boigne resigned his post in February, 1796 and left India in September, 1796. He spent his riches in his native town on benevolent schemes, and at his death in 1830 left twenty million francs.[1]]

Appa Khande Rao with George Thomas was in Mewat, and Begam Samru was at Sardhana. Lakhwa Dada, the Maratha commander of Saharanpur, was confined to his head-quarters for fear of the Sikhs. At this juncture when most of his troops were lying besieged at Jalalabad, Lakhwa Dada sought assistance from Appa Khande Rao Hari. He despatched George Thomas to help him. George crossed the Jamuna a little north of Delhi, and hurriedly advanced towards the Sikhs. The Sikhs who were familiar with the intrepidity and ruthlessness of this man precipitately retired to their homes. Thus the Maratha garrison was saved from complete destruction.

Lakhwa Dada, "a man somewhat imbued with the spirit of chivalry," was so deeply impressed with the achievement of George Thomas that he borrowed his services from Appa Khande Rao, and appointed him to the charge of Sonepat, Panipat and Karnal districts with 2,000 infantry, 200 cavalry and 16 pieces of field artillery. Thus George became 'warden of the marches' for Sindhia's dominions.

Bapuji Malhar[2] who was at this time the officer in charge of Sonepat-Panipat district was transferred to Saharanpur. Bapuji was also hard pressed. On the 12th November, 1795, a fight took place between him and the Sikhs. Many people were killed and wounded on both sides. On the 15th another action was fought between them in which Bapuji was defeated.[3]

[1]Buckland, 115; Beale, 110; Twining, 277-83; Fraser, I, 37-39.

[2]Bapuji commanded 1,000 infantry and ten pieces of artillery, *Memoirs of George Thomas*, 267.

[3]Rieu, I, 24, 036, folios 434b, 450b, 470b, 476a; *Additional*, 438a; Maheshwar, II, 275; *Calcutta Review*, LXI, 1875, pp. 43-44; *Memoirs of George Thomas*, 47-48; Compton, 129-30; *Muzaffarnagar District Gazetteer*, 180.

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The Sikhs massacre and plunder pilgrims at Hardwar, 10th April, 1796

The Sikhs again burst into the Doāb in March, 1796, when the winter crops were almost ready for the harvesting. Bapu Malhar, the Maratha officer at Saharanpur, tried to check their progress, but he was defeated and deprived of four pieces of cannon on the 20th March, 1796.[1] The Sikhs after plundering numerous places approached Hardwar, where a very large fair was about to take place.[2]

Hardwar at this time was only a small place, consisting of "only one street about 15 feet in breadth and one furlong and a half in length."[3]

On the occasion of a fair Hardwar became a great centre of trade: "Great numbers are led hither as much from commercial, as religious motives and through this channel the most important places in the Doāb, Delhi, and Lucknow, are supplied with the productions of the northern and western countries. The principal articles brought for sale are horses, mules, camels, a species of tobacco (called caccar), antimony, asafoetida, dried fruits, such as apricots, figs, prunes, raisins, almonds, pistachio nuts, and pomegranates, from Cabul, Candahar, Mooltan and the Punjab; shawls, dootas (dhussas) and pattoos, from Cashmere and Amritsir.

"Spotted turbans, looking-glasses, toys and various manufactures in brass and ivory from Jeypoor; shields from Rohilcund, Lucknow, and Silhet; bows and arrows from Mooltan and the Doāb; rock salt from Lahore; bastas and piece-goods from Rahn (Rahon) a large city in the Punjab. The Marwar country supplies a great many camels, and a species of flannel called *loi*. From the British provinces are brought kharwa, muslins, mushroo (or saranet), coconuts, and woollen cloths. Of the latter a few bales are sent on account of the Company, but the sale is very inconsiderable, and the coarsest only meet with a market. Here are also to be seen some Dutch and Venetian coins.

[1] *Delhi Chronicle*, 434.

[2] The details of this incident are gleaned from the *Narrative of a Journey to Sirinagur* by Captain Thomas Hardwicke who commenced his journey from Fatahgarh on 3 March, 1796. He stayed at Hardwar from April 1 to 19, and saw the whole affair with his own eyes. (cf. *Asiatic Researches*, 1801, pp. 309-21; *Calcutta Review*, LXI, 1875, pp. 44-47.

[3] Hamilton, I, 450.

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"The horses and cattle are dispersed indiscriminately all over the fair, held in the bed of the river, which at this period is nearly dry.

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"At the foot of the pass into the mountains there was formerly a Gorkha post, belonging to Nepaul, to which slaves were brought down from the hills and exposed for sale. Many hundreds of these poor wretches, of both sexes, from 3 to 30 years of age, were formerly imported from all parts of the interior of the hills and sold; the prices were from 10 to 150 rupees. The average price of camels from Lahore is 75 rupees, and common horses from 200 to 300 rupees "[1]

The great Kumbh[2] fair fell in April, 1796. The pilgrims visited Hardwar from all parts of India. Their number was estimated by Thomas Hardwicke, an eye-witness," at two and a half millions of souls." He computed it "with moderation," though it might stagger our imagination in view of the absence of good means of communication and the unsettled condition of the country.[3]

The Gosains were managing the affairs at the fair. Gosains are one of the four chief classes of Hindu devotees. They are the followers of Shivji Mahadev. Those strictly religious-minded go naked, and are called *Nangas*. They "subject themselves to most severe tortures and self-privations." Others lead a secular life, and generally employ themselves as merchants and soldiers. In the latter capacity they were noted for reckless courage and indomitable spirit. Their services were frequently sought after by various princes of the day. Mahadji Sindhia retained one such body in his army under their celebrated leader Himmat Gir Gosain popularly known as Himmat Bahadur. Shuja-ud-daulah also kept them.

"They often attached themselves," says Compton on p. 128, "to the service of a particular chief, and for sudden attacks or reprisals no men could be found better fitted, for they were inured to pain and privation by the nature of their calling and were absolutely

[1]ibid, 450-2; *Memoirs of George Thomas*, 44.

[2]This takes place every 12th year.

[3]At the two annual fairs from 2 to 3 lakhs of pilgrims collected here. On the occasion of the next Kumbh fair in "April, 1809, they were estimated at two millions," ibid, 450.

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indifferent to death."

For many years past the Gosains had enjoyed superiority over all other saintly tribes. On the occasions of fairs they assumed "official prerogatives, regulating police of the fair and superintending the collection of the local cesses year after year. Their *Mohunts* even exercised magisterial powers and daily administered justice after their own rough fashion, flogging, fining and otherwise punishing real or supposed malefactors."

The Gosains apprehended some trouble from the Bairagi sect, the worshippers of Vishnu. They were next to Gosains in importance, number and power. They prohibited all other sects from carrying with them in the fair swords or any other arms. The Gosains armed themselves with swords and shields, while others carried only sticks. Hardwicke says that he pitched his tent at a suitable place. The presence of Englishmen excited the curiosity of the crowd, and parties after parties came there to survey them silently. In order to protect the Englishmen the Gosains took "possession of every spot round the tents, even within the ropes" as a safeguard from any violence from other tribes of *faqirs*.

The Gosains maintained perfect peace and order in the fair until the arrival of nearly 14,000[1] Sikhs, followed by a large number of Udasi *faqirs*, the devout followers of Srichand, son of Guru Nanak. Raja Sahib Singh of Patiala was the leader of the Sikhs; while Rae Singh of Buriya and his nephew Sher Singh served him as deputies. The Sikhs encamped at Jawalapur, a suburb of Hardwar, and deposited their families and baggage in that village. Some Udasis then came to Hardwar, selected a site for their camp on the bank of the Ganga, and without the permission of the Gosain Mahant they pitched their tents and set up their flag for the guidance of their followers.

The Gosains felt offended for this want of courtesy and attention to their authority. They pulled down the tents, removed the flag and insultingly drove away the Udasis, plundering "the whole property to a considerable amount."

[1]"In 1808, such large bodies of armed men passed through the district of North Saharanpoor from the Seik country, bound to Hardwar, that the envoy at Lahore was directed to remonstrate with Raj(a) Runjeet Singh of Lahore, on the impropriety of permitting and perhaps encouraging them to enter the British territories without any previous application to the officers of Government." Hamilton, I, 450.

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The chief Udasi priest hurried away to the Sikh camp at Jawalapur, and complained to Raja Sahib Singh against the ill-treatment he had received from the Gosains. The Raja held a council with his two deputies, and despatched an agent to the Gosain Mahant for immediate redress.

"The Mehunts heard their complaints, expressed concern at what had happened, and promised their assistance in obtaining the redress sought for: and the matter for the present rested here; the Goosseyns giving back, to the Seeks, all the plunder they had taken, and admitting of their free ingress and egress to the river." The Gosains also "promised faithfully to punish the culprits. The triumvirate professed to be satisfied with this assurance. In reality, they were meditating a terrible revenge."

The great bathing day was on the 8th April. The multitude bathed[1] on the *ghats* and quietly melted away. The next day also passed off peacefully and "the Gosain Mohunt, congratulating himself on his excellent management, was already preparing to depart. But one day more remained."

The 10th April was the last day of the fair. In the previous night the Sikhs removed their women, children and property to a distant village. At 8 o'clock in the morning all of them mounted and armed with swords, spears and firearms appeared at different bathing *ghats*. They attacked all tribes of *faqirs* without distinction —Gosains, Bairagis and Nangas, etc.—and commenced massacring them. Hundreds of the pilgrims rushed into the river to escape the fury of their pursuers, and in the attempt of swimming across many were drowned. Thousands made for the hills overlooking the town. "It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that the *ghats* ran with blood. Some five hundred were put to the sword. It is impossible to surmise how many more might have perished, but for a providential accident."

By chance it so happened that about 5 kms below Hardwar on the eastern side of the river at a place called "Unjinnee" Ghat, a battalion of the Nawab Wazir of Oudh with two six-pounders was stationed under Captain Murray. Two companies of this battalion

[1]"No particular ceremony is used in bathing, which consists merely of simple immersion. The depth at the proper season is only four feet, and both sexes plunge in indiscriminately. Those who are rigidly pious are introduced by a couple of Brahmins, who having dipped the penitent in the holy stream reconduct him to the shore." Hamilton, I, 451-52.

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under an Indian officer had been accidently sent across the river by Murray. It was at this place that several thousands of *sanyasis* had taken shelter. When the Sikhs came in pursuit of them the soldiers greeted them with a smart fire and thus kept the Sikh horse in check. On the opposite bank Captain Murray fixed his guns, and got ready to fire upon the Sikhs. Thus the Sikhs were held up, and at 5 o'clock in the afternoon they gave up the massacre of the *sanyasis*. As none was armed except the Gosains who also had no firearms, the contest was absolutely unequal and the Sikhs lost only twenty men. The retreating Sikhs then molested thousands of non-*sanyasi* pilgrims, and plundered them of their property.[1] In the morning of the 11th April they retired from Hardwar in three divisions.

A huge crowd that had gathered opposite the camp of the Englishmen could not be taken across the river in the night and they spent their time in dreadful alarm, fearing the approach of the Sikhs the following morning. Their fears, however, proved groundless owing to the departure of the Sikhs; and "they offered up their prayers for the English gentlemen, whose presence, they universally believed, had been the means of dispersing the enemy."

Three persons are responsible for this treachery—Raja Sahib Singh, Rae Singh, and Sher Singh. The Raja was by nature vindictive[2] and also suffered from fits of insanity.[3] Rae Singh and Sher Singh held Jawalapur in their estates, and as this place was the entrance to Hardwar, it brought them a large income from the pilgrims. This income had first gone to the Marathas. "The Mahrattas," says the eye-witness George Thomas, "receive a tax upon horses and camels coming to the fair, the former paying eight annas per head, and the latter six annas; one-half of this impost is levied at the village Joalahpore, and the remainder at Hurdwar. Hackerys, or wheeled carriages pay a tax of eight annas, and the covered *doolies* for the women two annas. There is likewise a *resoom* (custom) upon the sales of horses and camels, on the former

[1] "They looted all the pilgrims they came across with perfect impartiality." *Calcutta Review*, LXI, 1875, p. 47.

[2] On a later occasion Sahib Singh caused the ruin and death of his sister, Sahib Kaur, a remarkable woman who should be counted as one of the preservers of the Patiala State.

[3] Sahib Singh was subject to "habitual derangement of intellect." Hamilton, I, 463; *Husain Shahi*, 242.

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ten per cent, and the latter eight, which is paid equally between the vender and purchaser."[1] On this occasion, however, the share at Jawalapur was realized by Rae Singh and Sher Singh; but it seems they coveted the Hardwar share also, which had gone to the Gosains. Hence these two Sikh chiefs were bent upon retaliation. Clever as they were they made Sahib Singh also a party with them apparently promising him a portion of the loot and thus managed the whole affair as above described.

G.R.C. Williams while concluding the account of this episode remarks:

"The Sikhs are, let me remind the reader, like all Asiatics, by nature prone to treachery and exceedingly vindictive. When their passions are roused, they perhaps, surpass others as much in perfidy and cruelty as they unquestionably do in endurance and bravery. The representative Singh, frank and open-hearted, straightforward and chivalrous, is a creature of imagination. Indeed such qualities are book-makers, viewing him from a distance, love to attribute to him, rarely exist in a barbarian, however valorous he may be. At all events, a fine or a flogging could not wipe out the insults above described, in the estimation of a haughty Sirdar of the last century, nor was it likely that the greedy freebooters of Jugadree and Booreea, having once got what they considered a good excuse for inflicting reprisals, would calmly witness the appropriation of dues, the collection of which they had themselves once enjoyed. Under the circumstances, an explosion was inevitable [The cesses imposed upon the pockets probably, when they held pilgrims at one time went into their Joualapore in *jāedād*."[2]

The presence of a large force of the Sikhs at Hardwar just on the border of Oudh territory excited alarm in the mind of the British Government. But the Sikhs returned homeward from this place. A strong Maratha force was also advancing towards Saharanpur, and William Palmer felt satisfied at it. In a letter to the Governor-General dated Fatahgarh, the 23rd April, 1796, he stated that the Maratha force would "prevent their giving any disturbance to the possessions of the Vizier."[3]

Whatever the case might be, this incident as well as the general

[1] *Memoirs of George Thomas*, 43.
[2] *Calcutta Review*, LXI, 1875, p. 46.
[3] *Sindhia's Affairs*, 1794-99.

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course of Sikh history shows that when the feelings of cupidity and vindictiveness were aroused in the mind of a Sikh, his wrath was terrible; and then he would make no distinction between proper and improper, fair and unfair, religious and irreligious, human and inhuman, strong and weak, man and woman; and also between a Sikh and a non-Sikh. This was in particular the main aspect of their character in the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

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CHAPTER 18

Clash with Thomas, Perron and the British, 1797-1803

Early life and career of George Thomas

Among the most notorious adventurers in northern India towards the end of the eighteenth century was a foreigner who entitled himself the Raja of Hansi. It was George Thomas, an Irish, known in this province as *Jahaz Sahib*. He was born about the year 1758. The poverty of his parents left him uneducated and compelled him to leave for India to earn his livelihood. He served in a ship as a cabin-boy, or as some affirm, a common sailor, and landed at Madras in 1780. Having spent some years in Karnatak with Poligars, a poor class of chiefs inhabiting the jungle and mountainous districts he became discontented with his position. Five years later he went to Hyderabad and enlisted in the Nizam's army as a private gunner. He gave up this job six months afterwards, and in 1787 walked on foot to Delhi where he sought service under the celebrated Begam Samru, who held the fief of Meerut district.

Above six feet in height and extraordinarily strong, he was at once employed by the Begam who was an excellent judge of character. His ability and bravery soon won him the confidence of the Begam. He fell in love with the Begam but soon lost interest in the old lady and found enjoyment with the young beauties in the Begam's large household. The Begam then married him to one of her slave girls named Marie whom she had adopted. The Emperor had granted her a jagir on the borders of Delhi on the condition of checking Sikh inroads from that direction. The Begam appointed George Thomas to administer this jagir. He repulsed the Sikh attacks, penetrated into their villages, laid waste their fields, and charged heavy blackmail. He was then promoted to the command of a battalion in her army. In 1789 Shah Alam II invested

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the fort of Gokalgarh, a little to the north-west of then Agra, under the charge of Najaf Quli Khan, a rebel courtier of Delhi. Begam Samru with George Thomas was in attendance upon the Emperor. One night Najaf Quli attacked the imperial army unexpectedly when they were dissipating themselves in debauch, and defeated it. The Emperor would have been taken prisoner if George Thomas had not been there. The Begam on realizing the delicacy of the situation ordered Thomas with 100 men and a six-pounder gun to rescue the Emperor; whilst she herself rode in a palanquin, reached the scene of battle and commenced the fight. After a desperate conflict Najaf Quli was beaten and the Emperor saved. For this signal service the Begam was rewarded with the title of "His Most Beloved Daughter," and Thomas received a rich *khilat*.

As the Sikhs were frequently invading the Doāb, the Begam, to protect the territories placed under her charge by the Emperor, appointed Thomas in the civil and military administration of an extensive tract with his seat at Tappal, 53 kms north-west of Aligarh. This duty he performed admirably and the Sikh incursions into his territory considerably decreased. The revenues of the district amounted to Rs. 70,000.

In 1792 he was thrown out of the Begam's favour by the intrigues of a rival named Le Vaisseau, who commanded the artillery of the Begam, whom he married. Thomas raised the standard of revolt. The Begam at once marched against him, besieged Tappal and forced Thomas to surrender. In view of his past services, the Begam generously spared his life and allowed him to depart unmolested.

When leaving Tappal he had only fifty pounds with him. But he was not to remain unoccupied. His immense strength, wild energy, daring intrepidity, considerable foresight and gigantic form soon attracted to him a band of desperadoes. He took to plunder and increased the number of his followers to 250 mounted men. With this body he marched to Anupshahar where he was employed by Apa Khande Rao Hari a feudatory of Sindhia for Mewat region in October, 1793.

James Skinner who knew him personally writes about him thus: "His manners were grave and gentle, and he was courteous to all. He was frank, generous and humane, though subject to sudden ebullitions of temper, in which he committed acts of which he

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quickly repented, and as soona toned for. His conduct to the families of all who fell or were disabled in his service, was a convincing proof of his generosity, and the devoted attachment of his personal followers is the best evidence of their appreciation of his character."[1]

George Thomas in Maratha service, 1793-98

Apa Khande Rao assigned to him as fiefs Tijārā, Tapukrā, and Firozpur Jhirka. He plundered Bahadurgarh and seized Jhajjar, all worth one lakh and a half annually. He served in this area from October, 1793, to October, 1795 and successfully battled against Sikh inroads, whose intensity largely decreased.

In October, 1795 a body of 5,000 Sikhs entered Saharanpur district, and began plundering Jalalabad. Apa Khande Rao sent Thomas to expel the Sikh raiders. He discharged this duty so admirably that it drew appreciation of Lakhwa Dada, Sindhia's Governor of Northern India. Lakhwa Dada appointed Thomas warden of the frontier along the Jamuna with 2,000 infantry, 200 cavalry and 16 pieces of cannon. He was granted the revenues of Sonepat, Panipat and Karnal districts for the maintenance of his force. In October, 1795 Begum Samru was imprisoned by her stepson Zafaryab Khan who assumed control over the Begam's estates. When all her efforts to secure liberty had failed, she appealed to Thomas for help. Thomas did not fail in his duty towards his old patron and mistress. He marched to Sardhana, defeated and imprisoned Zafaryab, and restored the Begum to authority.

Thomas had to maintain a regular fight with the Sikhs on both the banks of river Jamuna throughout the period of his employment as warden of the marches, and he was generally successful. This fact aroused the jealousy of Apa Khande Rao who instigated many plots against him. He even tried to kill him. To his luck Apa Khande Rao died on June 25, 1797. Apa's successor was his nephew Vaman Rao who continued his uncle's policy towards Thomas.[2]

[1] *Memoirs of George Thomas*, 1-6; Compton, 109-13; Gery and Garrett, 34-42; *European Adventurers*, 217; Fraser, I, 201-9; Keene. *Hindustan under Free Lances*, 75-80; *Meerut District Gazetteer*, 157-58; *Dilliyethil*, II, 4, 84, 119, 128, 130; N.A.I., *Foreign Department, Political Proceedings*, 23 November, 1798, no. 5; Sarkar, *Fall*, IV, 232-33.

[2] *P.R.C.*, I, 206; Sarkar, *Fall*, IV, 232-38.

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George Thomas's fights with the Sikhs, 1797-98

Shamli, an important town in Muzaffarnagar district near the eastern bank of the Jamuna, was one of the *parganahs* assigned to Sikhs as the price for their maintaining peace in the Doāb, in the discharge of which duty the Sikhs had always failed. The district was under the charge of Gurdit Singh of Ladwa who ruled over this place through his agent, a Sikh officer. This person was intriguing with his co-religionists on the other side of the river, and was stirring up a rebellion against the Marathas.

On the 27th June, 1797, it was reported to Dhar Rao that some soldiers of Gurdit Singh of Ladwa plundered a village which was included in the *jagir* of Imam Husain Khan. Dhar Rao wrote to the Sikh chief to restore property and cattle as "such deeds did not behove them." He also threatened to punish him in case he refused to comply with his request.[1]

When the news of the refractory attitude of this person reached Bapuji Malhar, the Maratha Governor of Saharanpur, he summoned George Thomas to punish him. Thomas immediately marched to Shamli, met the Sikh chief outside the town, and forced him to retire within the walls "after a most gallant resistance" on the part of the Sikh commander. He then delivered an assault on the town and took it by storm. The officer, his son, and all others who had not fled from the place lost their lives.

After the capture of Shamli Thomas marched to Lakhnauti where Baharmand Ali Khan, the chief of Turkoman colony had revolted in the expectation of assistance from the Sikhs. Bapuji had laid siege to the place; but his plans were foiled. When George marched to the rescue of Bapuji Baharmand Ali offered terms of peace, which were at once accepted, in order to be free to act against the Sikhs. Thus Thomas's valour and energy nipped the insurrection in the bud.[2]

Early in 1798 Thomas marched to Karnal where a body of Sikhs had gathered in rebellion against the Maratha rule in that district. Here four successive actions were fought, in which both sides sustained heavy losses. Thomas's artillery always proved superior to the tactics of the Sikhs who did not possess this arm. In this fight

[1]India Office MS, no. 4087.

[2]*Calcutta Review*, LXI, 1875, pp. 47-48; *Memoirs of George Thomas*, 59-60; Compton, 131-32; *Muzaffarnagar District Gazetteer*, 181.

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Thomas lost 500 men and the Sikhs nearly twice as much. Peace was then concluded, and in accordance with the terms of the treaty the Sikhs evacuated the place.

After this Thomas marched into the Doāb to join Bapuji against a Rohilla chief who, at the instigation of the Sikhs had crossed over the Ganga and created troubles in the Maratha country. But before Thomas's arrival Bapuji had defeated him. A body of Sikhs had reached there by this time to assist the Rohillas; but finding Thomas ready to oppose them retired without any fighting. Bapuji, thereupon returned to his seat of government at Saharanpur.

Shortly afterwards some differences arose between Bapuji and George Thomas. In order to counterpoise Thomas's energy and activity he enlisted a body of Sikhs in his service. These Sikhs worked upon his fears against his formidable subordinate, and widened the gulf between the two. It led to the outbreak of hostilities, and an engagement took place at a ford on the Jamuna. This time the country people joined the Marathas against Thomas, and commenced plundering his camp; but he forced them to give him a passage.[1]

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Thomas's expedition into Jaipur territory, 1798

George Thomas retired to Jhajjar, where he began to act almost independently. He stood badly in need of money. He attacked the neighbouring territory of the Raja of Jaipur, and began collecting ransom for sparing villages and towns from plunder. At Urika, 58 kms north-east of jhunjhunu, he obtained a ransom of Rs. 52,000 which gave him some relief.

In 1798 Lakhwa Dada ordered Thomas to join the Maratha army in fighting against Jaipur. He immediately responded to the call. After a fierce battle Thomas occupied Fatahpur, a fortified town, 50 kms north of Sikar. In this bloody engagement Rajputs sustained 2,000 casualties in killed and wounded, whilst Thomas's loss was only 300 men.

In April, 1798 Thomas gave up Maratha service owing to continuous intrigues of Vaman Rao, and settled down at Jhajjar as an independent chief. In September, 1798 Thomas attacked the territory of Bikaner. The Raja secured peace by paying a sum of one lakh of rupees.

[1] *Memoirs of George Thomas*, 79-80, 82; Compton, 135-36.

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Thomas carves out an independent principality in Haryana

George Thomas carved out for himself a small independent principality in the neighbourhood of Delhi. He set up his headquarters at Jhajjar 35 kms west of the capital. He had such a successful career in all his warlike activities that he was called "Jauraj Jang" or George the Victorious. He built a strong fort near Jhajjar and named it Georgegarh after his name. He commanded "a force of eight regiments of foot, a thousand horsemen and about fifty guns."[1]

As George Thomas was bitterly opposed to the Sikhs Almas Beg of Hansi invited him to occupy the whole of Haryana with his headquarters at Hansi, 130 kms south-west of Delhi, which stood nearly in the centre of Haryana. Thomas took the hint and shifted to that place.[2] Situated on an eminence, the place could easily be defended. Thomas repaired the fortifications and established a gun foundry. He cast his own guns, made matchlocks, muskets and powder. He set up a mint, and issued coins in his own name. In order to remove the scarcity of water he sunk thirty wells; and encouraged traders and merchants to settle there.

He then extended his territory. It was bounded in the north by the territories of Raja Sahib Singh of Patiala; in the north-west by the country of Bhattis, in the west by Bikaner, to the south by Jaipur, on the south-east by Dadri, to the east by districts adjoining Delhi, and in the north-east by Rohtak and Panipat. The tract possessed by Thomas was oval in shape, extending to the north as far as the river Ghaggar, to the south by the town of Behal, in the east to Maham and in the west to Behadra. It measured about 200 kms from the north to south and the same distance from east to west, with a total area of nearly 8,000 square kilometers. His principality contained 14 parganahs consisting of 253 villages with a revenue of Rs. 2,86,000. Besides these, five more parganahs having 151 villages with a revenue of Rs. 1,44,000 were held from Marathas as service tenure. Several important towns such as Fatahabad, Hissar, Tohana, Hansi and Bhiwani were included in his territory.

Some European officers served in his army. Morris was the first to join him. In 1801 more Europeans, Birch and Hopkins, and an Anglo-Indian Haidar Jang Hearsey joined him. All of them came

[1]Sarkar, *Fall*, IV, 239.
[2]Bute Shah, 295b.

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from the brigades of French General Perron. Two European sergeants were also in his service.

George Thomas's expedition towards Raekot, 1798

Bedi Sahib Singh of Una declared a religious war against the Afghans of Raekot, Ludhiana and Jagraon. Their chief was Rae Ilyas, a lad of fifteen. The Sikh force numbering about 7,000 was opposed by him at village Jodh. The Afghan commander, Roshan Khan, was killed in the action. Rae Ilyas sought help from Patiala and other sardars in the neighbourhood. The chiefs of Patiala, Jind, Kaithal and Kalsia immediately came to his rescue, and drove away the Bedi.

The Sikh villages oppressed by Afghan collectors invited the Bedi to relieve them of their tyranny. The Bedi led the second invasion against Raekot. He besieged Ludhiana. Rae Ilyas invited George Thomas for help. "Thomas who was rapidly extending his territory, was only too glad of an opportunity of interference in the affairs of any of the Cis-Satlej States, and at once left Hansi with a strong force."[1] On hearing this news the Bedi raised the siege and retired to his territory.

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George Thomas's expedition to Patiala, 1798

The Sikhs raided the territory of George Thomas. He was enraged and not only repelled their attack but also closely pursued them up to Patiala. The Sikhs fought hard to check his advance, but he went on. Raja Sahib Singh of Patiala fled away. His sister, Sahib Kaur, bravely defended the capital. Eventually she accepted the terms of peace, and George Thomas returned to Georgegarh, plundering Jind on the way. Sahib Singh did not approve of the terms, and hot words passed between the brother and the sister. Sahib Singh imprisoned her. She sought help from Thomas who immediately left for Patiala at the head of a strong force. On his approach to Patiala Sahib Singh agreed to the terms, set Sahib Kaur free, and paid full expenses of George's second expedition. Thomas declared that Sahib Kaur was "a better man than her brother."[2]

[1]Griffin, *The Rajas of the Punjab*, 80.

[2]Grey and Garrett, *European Adventurers of Northern India, 1785 to 1849*, Lahore, 40, 51; Griffin, *Rajas*, 81.

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The Sikhs constrain Madho Rao Phalke, March, 1798

George Thomas's rapid actions had no effect on sturdy Sikhs, who did not decrease their lawless activities. In March, 1798, Madho Rao Phalke was the *nazim* of Saharanpur. He was constantly troubled by the Sikh raiders. His assistant Jaguji distinguished himself for a signal advantage gained over the Sikhs in an action. But this success did not help Madho Rao much, as the Sikhs continued their exertions unabated. Shortly after the Maratha resistance ceased. and their forces fell back to Saharanpur, where they took up a defensive position. Captain Bradshaw, Assistant to the Resident with Daulat Rao Sindhia in a despatch dated Fatahgarh, the 5th April, 1798, stated that the Sikhs "might oblige it altogether to quit that quarter, if the distracted state of the Punjab harassed by the dissensions of its numerous petty chiefs, did not furnish sufficient employment for them in their own territories."[1]

The Sikhs fight in alliance with Shambu Nath against Ashraf Beg, September-October, 1798

A few months later the Sikhs served under the new *nazim* of Saharanpur. Shambu Nath Mahajan was the Diwan of Imam Bakhsh Khan, the district officer of Saharanpur under Lakhwa Dada, the Maratha Governor of the Upper Doāb Daulat Rao Sindhia, the successor of Mahadji Sindhia, was fighting at this time against the latter's widows popularly known as the *Bāis*. Lakhwa Dada had espoused the cause of the widows and was already busy in fighting for them. On behalf of his master Lala Shambu Nath managed to employ 5,000 Sikh horsemen; and with 10,000 infantry and 20 pieces of cannon marched southward with a view to seize the estates of various European officers in the service of Sindhia. General Perron, who had succeeded his countryman De Boigne in the command of Daulat Rao Sindhia's largest regular force, was at this time at Aligarh. He despatched his veteran commander Ashraf Beg at the head of three battalions. 1,000 horse, some Rohilla infantry and 10 pieces of cannon. A little later General Perron detached on the 15th September Captain F.L. Smith with two battalions to join Ashraf Beg, while on the 20th September he himself left in that direction. Perron commanded

[1]N.A.I., *Political Proceedings*, 9 July, 1798, no. 109.

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forty battalions each consisting of 500 men, and provided with "4 field pieces, a carronade or Howitzer, and some pieces of ordnance of large calibre for the purpose of throwing grape."[1]

When Ashraf Beg reached Khatauli in Muzaffarnagar district, he learnt that Shambu Nath was at hand ready to attack him. Ashraf Beg immediately took up a strong position to defend himself. Next morning the Sikhs alone appeared on the scene, and failed in their attempt at decoying him from his post. The following morning Shambu Nath arrived with a force and called upon Ashraf Beg to surrender. This proposal was scornfully rejected by Ashraf Beg with the remarks that "*Buneas* (or shopkeepers, of which caste Simboonauth was) had best mind their own business, and not think of threatening soldiers, whose lives were sold as sheep were to the butcher; and that, for his own part, he had come there to die, or to teach him to sell grain."

Shambu Nath immediately attacked him. Ashraf Beg offered stout resistance. He ultimately succeeded in repelling the attack and seizing four or five of Shambu Nath's cannon, but at a great loss, having sacrificed one-fourth of his three battalions alone in killed. In the evening he took shelter inside the town. Shambu Nath at once besieged the place.

Ashraf Beg decided to take the enemy by surprise. At 3 o'clock in the morning when Shambu Nath's soldiers were fast asleep, Ashraf Beg delivered a vehement assault with all his horse and 1,000 infantry. This had the desired effect. Shambu Nath's camp was overrun and several pieces of cannon were taken away from him. By this time the day broke. Shambu Nath and his men recovered from the effects of the sudden sally, and attacked Ashraf Beg on all sides. Ashraf Beg at once threw his men into a square and retreated to the town with all his cannon. "The Sikhs pressed him hard, and fought nobly." Ashraf Beg sustained heavy losses in this affair. About three hundred men were left dead on the field including several officers of great ability and courage. This disheartened Ashraf Beg so much that he remained shut inside the town for five days.

At that time the news came that Smith had arrived near by to reinforce Ashraf Beg, and that General Perron with all his force was on his way soon to join him. Shambhu Nath was greatly

[1] *Memoirs of George Thomas*, 265.

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alarmed, raised the siege and retreated towards Saharanpur. Ashraf Beg started in pursuit of him, and seized some heavy guns, which Shambu Nath could not carry quickly. Muhammad Azim Khan, commander of a battalion in Shambhu Nath's army, having been bribed by the enemy,[1] deserted him and joined Ashraf Beg. Smith also united with Ashraf Beg in the pursuit, which continued as far as Saharanpur. Finding himself incapable of holding against this formidable army Shambu Nath[2] along with his Sikh allies crossed the Jamuna and came to Sikh territory and his remaining infantry and guns surrendered to Smith, who occupied Saharanpur by the close of October.

Perron shortly after resumed almost all the Sikh *jagirs* in the Doāb. Jhinjhana which yielded an annual revenue, of Rs. 36,554 still remained in possession of Gurdit Singh; but Kandhla was transferred from him to Colonel Hessing. Shamli which had a revenue of Rs. 38,000 per annum was added to the *parganah* of Chhaprauli, and given over to Shah Nizam-ud-din, a great friend of Sindhia and comptroller of the Imperial household.[3] Perron, however, did not possess a real hold over this country, as it still submitted to the Sikhs and Raja Ram Dayal of Landhaura.[4]

Henceforward the raids of the Sikhs into the Ganga Doāb considerably decreased, as they could not stand against the French commanders posted at strategic places all over the upper Ganga Doāb. A few years later the British dominions extended up to Delhi and the Jamuna with the result that the Sikhs lost all their influence in this territory.[5]

Perron advances against the Sikhs, December, 1798-April, 1799

General Perron who was marching to join Smith and Ashraf Beg

[1]"His troops having been corrupted by means of a large sum of money, which Perron found means to distribute, Simbonauth was at length necessitated to submit and give up part of his districts, to secure the remainder from the grasp of the Marhattas". (*Memoirs of George Thomas*, 189.)

[2]Shambu Nath later on became the first tahsildar of Saharanpur under the British Government.

[3]Perron resumed this territory in 1801, and added this to Kairanah and Bidauli parganahs which formed his personal jagirs.

[4]Fraser, I, 163-66; *Calcutta Review*, LXI, 1875, p. 48; *Memoirs of George Thomas*, 189; *Muzaffarnagar District Gazetteer*, 181-82; *Saharanpur District Gazetteer*, 195.

[5]*Muzaffarnagar District Gazetteer*, 128.

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against Shambhu Nath was at *Nakar*[1] on the 1st November, 1798. By this time Shambu Nath had retired to the Panjab. Perron therefore turned towards Delhi where he arrived on the 25th November. After some resistance the *qiladar* submitted to him on the 2nd December. Perron spent some time in making arrangements for the work of government, and on the 15th December left for Karnal to chastise the Sikhs. He reached Karnal on the 1st January, 1799, when he summoned Raja Sahib Singh of Patiala, Raja Bhag Singh of Jind, Bhanga Singh of Thanesar, Gurdit Singh of Ladwa, Bhai Lal Singh of Kaithal, and several other petty *sardars*. The Sikh chiefs made a show of resistance and gathered at Patiala to concert a plan of action. Perron also got busy to employ local Muslims against them. The first to join was Gulsher Khan of Kunjpura, and by the 20th February he had collected as many as 10,000 horsemen. Perron then marched to Thanesar; but Bhanga Singh escaped to Patiala. The Sikhs, however, came to terms and the peace treaty was signed on the 10th March, 1799. Perron stayed at Thanesar till the 1st April, by which time all the Sikh chiefs between the Jamuna and the Satluj had visited him. He left Thanesar on the 2nd April and arrived at Panipat on the 10th April, where he was joined by Begam Samru with four battalions.[2]

George Thomas's offensive campaign against Jind, November, 1798-May, 1799

On the retirement of Perron the Sikhs were left undisturbed for about six months, when they were again engaged in a serious scuffle with George Thomas. Appa Khande Rao had committed suicide by drowning himself in the Jamuna in 1797. His death was a severe blow to George who was now left without a patron. Soon afterwards he was taken in service by Bapuji. After employment of about a year or so differences arose between him and his master. Bapuji dismissed him and the lands granted to him were resumed. Thomas was again left without a master and without the means to maintain troops numbering 3,000. He took to the profession of a freebooter, and began plundering towns and cities in the neighbourhood of Delhi, which formed the crownlands.

The Emperor Shah Alam II had been reduced to such a miserable condition that he had no courage and means to check his

[1]107 kms north of Jaipur.
[2]Fraser, I, 168-69.

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inroads. The *Delhi Akhbar* of the 18th October, 1797 states:

"His majesty having remarked the absence of his domestics, who had neglected to attend in consequence of their wages having been withheld, became sorely vexed; and beating his head with both his hands he exclaimed in the bitterness of his heart, against the severity of his fate, deploring the humiliated condition to which he was reduced, from a state of a sovereign, commanding wealth and empire, to that of an individual abandoned by his most menial dependents. Mirza Akbar Shaw, who witnessed this affliction of his majesty, administered every argument of comfort and consolation to alleviate his distress."[1]

Thomas's impatient and impetuous nature and restless energy would not give him any peace. In the cold weather of 1798, finding himself free he started a campaign against Raja Bhag Singh of Jind, who had not liked Thomas's establishing himself in his close neighbourhood.

The cause of this invasion given by William Francklin, the historian and biographer of George Thomas, is that Bhag Singh of Jind "had, from Mr. Thomas's first entering the Province, behaved towards him in a hostile manner, for which Mr. Thomas now determined to retaliate."[2]

This charge against the Raja of Jind may be true, as George Thomas was a man of very ambitious nature. The existence of his independent principality in his neighbourhood was not a thing of pleasure for the Sikhs, and was indeed a source of perpetual danger and constant menace. He himself says: "At length, having gained a capital and country bordering on the Seik territories, I wished to put myself in a capacity, when a favourable opportunity should offer of attempting the conquest of the Punjab, and aspired to the honour of planting the British Standard on the banks of the Attock."

Griffin assigns another reason. He says that "in 1797, he (George) made overtures to the principal Sikh chiefs inviting them to join him in a combined resistance to the Mahrattas, and in the conquest of Northern India; but they regarded him with suspicion for his selfish aims were barely concealed, and they thought that to help him would only be to resign their own independence."[3]

[1]Seton-Karr, II, 491.
[2]*Memoirs of George Thomas*, 137.
[3]*The Rajas of the Punjab*, 76; Bakhtmal, 174-75.

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Bakhtmal describes some other incident which brought about this catastrophe: He writes that one Hasan Khan complained to George that he had been dispossessed of village Ksohan received by him from the Raja of Patiala as a *jagir* by Khushhal Singh, a courtier of the Raja, and that the Raja had refused to interfere. He offered George Rs. 7,000 if he would restore him his estates. Thomas took the money, and seized the village. As the village was situated near the city of Jind, Bhag Singh felt alarmed and expressed his displeasure. This enraged Thomas and he decided to attack Jind.[1]

An opportunity offered itself soon to George. In the winter of 1798 Shah Zaman invaded the Panjab, and the Sikhs got busy to oppose him. In view of the weak position of the Sikhs, George laid siege to Jind.[2]

In conformity with his usual tactics Thomas decided to take Jind by storm. In November, 1798, he suddenly appeared before the walls of the town. The Sikh garrison numbering, 3,000 offered him a bold resistance. In a fierce conflict Thomas was driven back with a loss of 400 men. The sudden and unexpected as the defeat was, it did not dismay Thomas. Just a few kilometres distant from Jind he reorganised his troops, returned to the place and laid siege to it expecting to compel the garrison to surrender.

On hearing of the siege of Jind the Raja of Patiala and the neighbouring Sikh chiefs of Karnal district were greatly perturbed in their own personal interest. At this time Shah Zaman had entered the Panjab, and the rumours stated that he was bound for Delhi, which created great alarm in the minds of the Sikh chiefs whose territories lay on his way.

Raja Sahib Singh of Patiala, "an indolent, weak-minded man" could not decide what to do, and invited the neighbouring Sikh chiefs to Patiala for consultation. On the 29th November, a letter arrived from Bhai Lal Singh of Kaithal stating that he could not come as he was going to Jind to assist Bhag Singh. On the 5th December another letter from him announced that he was encamped at Kole on his way to Jind and was there waiting for Bhika Singh, Diwan Ramdayal, Sawan Singh, Shyama Singh and Mamu Khan and other *sardars*. Raja Sahib Singh in reply stated that

[1]Bakhtmal, 174-75.

[2]At this time the town of Jind was about one kilometre long and three-fourths broad. It was surrounded by a brick wall without a ditch. (Hamilton, I, 464)

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owing to Shah Zaman's approach everybody was apprehensive, otherwise many chiefs would have gone to Jind.

On the 8th December Lal Singh's letter informed Sahib Singh of his arrival with Bhika Singh 21 kms from Jind. He asked the Raja to send reinforcements immediately observing that if Thomas took Jind he would invade Patiala afterwards. The Raja was alarmed, and consulted his sister Bibi Sahib Kaur, "a woman of a masculine and intrepid spirit." It was settled to send Tara Singh.

On the 10th December Dadar Singh arrived at Patiala from Jind. He was sent by Raja Bhag Singh to press Raja Sahib Singh either to march himself or to send Bibi Sahib Kaur at the head of a strong force to assist him. He stated that Bhika Singh, Mahtab Singh and Bhai Lal Singh had joined Bhag Singh and lay encamped at Kadela, 8 kms from Jind. The garrison with the assistance of Lal Singh made a sally, and Bhika Singh endeavoured to cut off the working party of the besiegers. Thomas's army opened fire upon them, and the Sikhs fled away to their respective places. Four horses and many of the besiegers were killed and wounded in the trenches. At one of the batteries they had given way; but later on they were forced to retire.

On the 11th December a letter came from Raja Bhag Singh urging Sahib Singh to come to his relief. The Raja consulted Bibi Sahib Kaur. She offered herself to take the field, and requested him to furnish her with Rs. 10,000.

On the 13th December when Bibi Sahib Kaur was ready to march to Jind, Raja Sahib Singh came to her. He expostulated with her saying that all were full of apprehension on account of Shah Zaman's invasion, and at such a juncture it was improper for her to go. Bibiji replied that "Raja Bhag Singh's house was as his own house; he had put off going from day-to-day, and now forbade her to go; who then could go as none of the old officers were there."[1] After a long discussion it was decided that Chaudhri Jaswant Singh should be sent for. Sudha Singh *Jamadar* was immediately despatched with a letter to Majha.[2] Jaswant Singh who went to Jaimal Singh, Bibiji's husband in Majha, came and presented that before his arrival, Jaimal Singh had sent off all his

[1]Translation of the original as preserved in the N.A.I.

[2]That day it was reported to the Raja that a *Mutsaddi* and 14 *harkaras* arrived from Lucknow to get news about Shah Zaman for the English.

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goods to the hills, and had dismissed him with a sum of Rs. 12,000. Bibiji took charge of this money.

On the 14th December it was reported that Jind was in danger of falling into the hands of George Thomas. In consequence Bibi Sahib Kaur immediately marched to that place with some troops.

On the 16th December Lal Singh's letter arrived. It stated that he had cut off some of Thomas's supplies, and killed and wounded many of his people. The Raja remarked that the great difficulty to encounter against George Thomas was his artillery; but his supplies could be cut off. He wrote to several Sikh chiefs to assist his sister in the campaign.

Bibi Sahib Kaur along with Tara Singh was joined on the way by Baghel Singh, Dip Singh and Hira Nand, the last of whom was accompanied by 200 horse. As soon as this party came within the striking distance, Thomas subjected them to a heavy artillery fire, and attacked them so vehemently that they fled back. Thomas pursued them driving them through their own camp, which consisted of straw huts. All the encampment was set on fire and plundered by Thomas's men.

On the 25th December Lal Singh's letter pressed Raja Sahib Singh to proceed to Jind with troops and artillery. The courtiers advised him to remain in the capital to give confidence to the people who were alarmed because of Shah Zaman's presence in Lahore.

By this time the troops of Raja Jaswant Singh of Nabha, Gurdit Singh of Ladwa, and Bhanga Singh and Mahtab Singh of Thanesar had arrived at Jind. So after a few days Bibi Sahib Kaur rallied Sikh troops under her command, and returned to the contest with a force of about 9,000. She succeeded in occupying two redoubts of Thomas in which "many of his best men were cut to pieces."

This proved the turning point in the course of the siege. Thomas's difficulties began to increase on all sides. Supplies of provisions ran short, country people who so far had remained neutral now turned against Thomas, and began to harass his men. The number of his troops was daily decreasing, while that of the Sikhs was increasing.

Thomas persisted in his attempt of continuing the siege till the end of February, 1799, when he decided to raise it. By this time the number of Sikhs had grown to 10,000 and Raja Sahib Singh had also left Patiala to join his sister with several pieces of artillery.

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After a blockade of three months George Thomas suddenly retired from Jind and hurried towards Hansi. He was pursued by the Sikhs. The peasantry rose on all sides, and checked his progress. Frequent attacks were made on his flanks and rear, and George was given a hard time. In order to relax the efforts of his pursuers Thomas adopted a trick which availed him nothing. He gave out that he was not going to Hansi; but was bound for Jaipur. This had no effect on his enemies, and they continued the pursuit.

It was the turn of the Sikhs to deceive Thomas. They gave up the pursuit, and by a different route managed to get between him and Hansi hoping to intercept him, and encamped at Narnaund, situated in the centre, between Jind and Hansi, the distance between these two places being about 40 kms. Thomas with his usual tactics decided to take the offensive. For this purpose he marched all night, and at dawn fell upon the Sikh camp. The Sikhs who were unprepared for the attack could not hold their ground. Their tents, baggage, *howdahs*[1] of their elephants, their bazaar, 1,000 saddles and about 200 horses fell into Thomas's hands. He might have seized their artillery and elephants also, had not his soldiers got out of control by dispersing on all sides in search of plunder.

The Sikhs being discomfited fled back to Jind. To their disappointment they found the doors of the town closed upon them by Bibi Sahib Kaur who scolded and taunted them for their cowardice. Then she got ready to take the field in person to show them how to fight. The Sikh chiefs felt extremely humiliated for "being exceeded in spirit by a woman." They resolved to resume their offensive with the determination either to conquer or to perish in the struggle.

Hot weather had now begun, and Thomas returned to Maham where he had securely deposited his heavy baggage. The Sikhs came to attack him, and at night encamped at a short distance

[1]*Howdah*. There were several kinds of sedans placed upon an elephant. The commonest of them was *howdah*. It was made of boards fastened with iron in the form of an octagonal platform. It was surrounded by boards half a metre high, and for the battlefield raised to a height of two-thirds of a metre. These boards were covered with iron or brass plates. The inside of it was divided into two unequal parts, one occupying three quarters of the space. This was sufficient to contain a man with pillows and cushions and sometimes even two men. The rest could tightly accommodate only one man. The *howdah* when covered by a canopy was called an *amāri*. (*Seir*, I, 31, f.n.)

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from Thomas. At that late hour they held a council of war deliberating upon the tactics they should employ. They had kept no watch. Just then their camp was attacked by a large band of robbers who created a great alarm by sounding trumpets in the same way as Thomas did. The Sikhs thought that they had been attacked by the full force of George and they were seized with a panic. Consequently, they abandoned their camp and galloped away with great precipitation. An article entitled "Patiala and General Perron," published in the *Proceedings of Indian Historical Records Commission*, XVIII, pp. 341-8, states that on this occasion the Sikh army was "disunited and demoralised," and that "the Nabha army held aloof; and Karam Singh Shahabadia fled on receipt of 5,000 *ashrafis*."[1]

Both sides were now tired of war. After some time George Thomas opened negotiations for peace through his Diwan Udai Chand on the terms that each party should remain in possession of their territories possessed before the siege of Jind. The termination of hostilities satisfied all except Raja Sahib Singh who refused to ratify the treaty. But Bibi Sahib Kaur signed it on behalf of Patiala in spite of the remonstrances of her brother. This enraged the Raja who immediately imprisoned his sister. Thomas could not tolerate the humiliating treatment meted out to a lady of a singular prowess, and threatened the Raja with dire consequences. The Raja fearing from war being dragged to his own country set her free.[2]

Sahib Kaur was again maltreated by Sahib Singh. The gallant lady was heart-broken at the unjust treatment that she had received and died shortly afterwards in 1799.[3]

Thomas's idea to conquer the Panjab

Lord Wellesley became the Governor-General of India in 1798. He was a great imperialist and was bent upon extending the British Empire in India. He wrote to George Thomas to supply him an account of the state of the Panjab. Thomas replied that he would

[1] *Punjab States Gazetteers*, XVII, A, 342; *Raj Khalsa*, II, 44.

[2] N.A.I., *Foreign Department, Political Proceedings*, 24 December, 1798, nos. 24, 28; 11 January, 1799, nos. 28, 30, 33; 25 January, 1799, no. 18; *Memoirs of George Thomas*, 87-94, 137-40; Compton, 137-42, 158-60; Bakhtmal, 172-79; Gian Singh, 960; Khushwaqt Rae, 175; Muhammad Hasan, 165-69; Bute Shah, 296a-b.

[3] *The Rajas of the Punjab*, 79.

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be glad to do so, but as he had forgotten English, he would write the memoir in Persian.[1]

In this memoir he explained that the Durrani rule in the Panjab had almost ended, and the Sikhs were completely disunited, though he praised them as cavaliers: "When mounted on horse-back their black flowing locks, and half-naked bodies, which formed in the stoutest and most athletic mould, the glittering of their arms, and the size and speed of their horses, render their appearance imposing and formidable, and superior to meet most of the cavalry in Hindostan."[2]

He suggested that he could conquer the Panjab for the British Government if he were given a little support. Wellesley could not fully trust an Irishman. He was not prepared to undertake such a scheme without deep consideration and full preparation. Besides his immediate attention was required towards Mysore and Marathas. Hence he rejected George's plan. George Thomas then decided to work independently and extend his own state into the territories occupied by the Sikhs. This scheme fell through owing to the appearance of another enemy on the scene.[3]

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Perron opposes Thomas

At this time the French revolutionary war was going on in Europe mainly between Great Britain and France. Ireland was trying to throw off the British yoke and sought help from France. The British Government suppressed the independence movement in Ireland. George Thomas was an Irish, yet he was favourably inclined towards the British and hated the French like an ordinary Englishman.

Mahadji Sindhia had employed in his service an eminent French general, Comte de Boigne, who served Sindhia from 1785 to 1796. He made Sindhia's army "the most formidable owned by any native prince in India."[4] Another French general, Perron, succeeded him. He commanded "with much brilliancy and success, the northern division of the Mahratta Army."[5] He was also "a man of

[1]Keene, *Fall*, 235 f.n.
[2]Grey and Garrett, 48, 51.
[3]*Memoirs of George Thomas*, 73.
[4]Griffin, *Rajas*, 88.
[5]ibid, 87.

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conspicuous ability."[1] His army was very strong and well trained. The Sikh sardars had come into contact with both Thomas and Perron, and knew that Perron was a superior general and better man. They were familiar with the ruthless methods of Thomas and knew that he was ambitious to become an independent ruler of Panjab.

While George Thomas was ambitious to seize the Panjab, Perron thought of conquering the whole of India.[2] Perron wished first of all to expel George Thomas from his principality of Hansi. The Sikh sardars were already keen to drive away Thomas from their neighbourhood. The Raja of Jind had suffered much at the hands of Thomas. Kaithal and Patiala were with him. So Raja Bhag Singh of Jind, Bhai Lal Singh of Kaithal, and two prominent sardars from Patiala, Hamir Singh and Chain Singh waited on Perron.

The first battle of Georgegarh, September 27, 1801

Perron immediately agreed to help them. A strong contingent of 2,000 troops under Louis Bourquien was ordered to join the Sikh force of 6,000 men at the end of August, 1801. These were the troops from Jind and Kaithal, while Patiala kept aloof and sent no help. Thomas had 5,000 men in action. Now a fierce campaign began. Thomas displayed great vigour and energy. With George Thomas were Captains Hearsey, Hopkins and Birch. Bourquien had besides Raja Bhag Singh of Jind and Bhai Lal Singh of Kaithal, an English officer Captain Louis Ferdinand Smith who was in Perron's service. The battle was fought at Georgegarh. In this battle Bourquien had not joined. Smith was defeated and driven away.

The second battle of Georgegarh, September 29, 1801

Two days later Bourquien himself came forward to retrieve his position. Bourquien had his full force of 8,000 men. Thomas had about 5,000 men. A most bloody and determined battle was fought. But the result remained indecisive. Each side lost at least 2,000 men. Seven European officers fough tunder Bourquien. Of these two were killed and two were seriously wounded. George Thomas had only two European officers of whom one was killed. At the end of the battle Bourquien's troops felt dejected and depres-

[1]ibid.
[2]Hugh Pearse, *The Hearseys*, London, 1905, p. 44.

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sed. If George Thomas had delivered the attack the following morning, he might have won the day, and in that event history of Delhi would have been different. But at this critical moment the base side of the great adventurer had its way. He spent the night in dissipation and drunkenness, and lost the only opportunity of winning the day.[1]

Siege of Georgegarh, September, 30-November 10, 1801

Bourquien sought reinforcements immediately. Perron sent Colonel Pedron with four battalions. To strengthen his position five more battalions were despatched from Colonel Hessing's brigade at Agra. Five thousand horse were also pressed on. Begam Samru contributed two battalions. The Sikhs were already there.

George Thomas took up an entrenched position at Georgegarh. He was completely surrounded on all sides. The situation was beyond control. Thomas held out obstinately for six weeks. No help came to him from any quarter. Supplies of food and fodder were entirely exhausted.

On November 10, 1801, at 9 P.M. Thomas with his two European officers and three hundred valiant horsemen dashed through Colonel Hessing's five battalions. Bourquien lost no time in putting the whole of his cavalry in pursuit of Thomas who made for his capital at Hansi. This place was 100 kms. by the straight and shortest route. Thomas covered 200 kms by a roundabout way. He successfully reached Hansi, and the place was immediately invested.

Thomas had sustained heavy losses. He lost his camp equippage and guns. His army was gone. They were disarmed and offered service by Perron. All of them rejected the proposal with great contempt, saying they could not be unfaithful to their master.

George Thomas surrenders at Hansi, December 20, 1801

The siege of Hansi lasted for 40 days. Thomas, his companions and a handful of soldiers faced the rigours of a siege bravely. On December 10, 1801, a violent assault was delivered on the town as well as on the fort. Thomas made a gallant defence. He lost 500 men out of 1200 men. Bourquien lost about 1,000 men. George Thomas left the town and took up his position in the fort. It was continu-

[1]Griffin says that this battle was fought at Bedi. *Rajas*, 87-88.

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ously bombarded for ten days. When everything—food, fodder, munitions ran short. Thomas sued for peace and surrendered on December 20, 1801. Thus his most remarkable career came to an end.[1] Thomas was allowed to go away in safety to British territory.

The battle of Delhi, September 13, 1803

Perron was not destined to enjoy his supreme position for long. The British had been steadily advancing from Calcutta towards the north-west. At the debut of the nineteenth century their dominions extended upto the eastern banks of river Jamuna. At this time there was no other organised and disciplined army in India than General Perron's army. This general was in the service of Daulat Rao Sindhia of Gwalior.

The British authorities considered General Perron as the only menace threatening their dominions and their policy of expansion. The Marathas and the Sikhs, though brave, were completely disunited. They feared lest Perron might act against the British under instigation of Napoleon Bonaparte Hence the British decided to begin a campaign against the Marathas, but in fact their real aim was to crush the power of Perron.

Lord Lake advanced from Kanpur towards Aligarh which was Perron's headquarters, and captured it at the end of August, 1803. Perron was so much disheartened that he left the service of Daulat Rao Sindhia. Lake then marched upon the imperial capital, Delhi. Bourquien was holding this place with the help of Gurdit Singh of Ladwa and Bhanga Singh of Thanesar, at the head of 5,000 troops. In the battle of Delhi, fought against Bourquien on September 11, 1803, the French general was defeated. Besides these two Sikh chiefs no sardar had joined either side. Lake took the blind, 83-year-old Emperor Shah Alam II under British protection. Daulat Rao Sindhia was again defeated at Laswari on November 1, 1803. He ceded to the British the districts of Delhi, Gurgaon, Rohtak, Hissar and Agra. The British government appointed an officer in charge of Delhi, called Resident Delhi.

Now the Cis-Satluj area lying between the rivers Jamuna and Satluj was divided into two clear-cut regions. The northern parts upto the neighbourhood of Delhi consisting of the districts of Panipat, Thanesar, Ambala, Patiala, Nabha, Ludhiana and Firoz-

[1]Hugh Pearse. 43-49; Griffin, *Rajas*, 87-88.

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pur remained with the Sikhs. The southern parts including Delhi consisting of the districts of Gurgaon, Rohtak, Hissar and Sirsa were under the British.[1] Formerly Shahabad and Thanesar were the royal parganahs in the Sarkar of Sarhind, as were Samana and Sunam. Indri was in the Sarkar of Saharanpur. It extended to the Jamuna, which in earlier days ran under the present western high bank of the canal. The possessions of the Sardars of Ladwa and Kaithal were originally a part of the subah of Delhi. The taluqas of Jind and Narwana were in the sarkar of Hissar.[2]

With the establishment of the British rule in the Delhi region as well as in the Ganga Doāb, the Sikh domination of the Delhi Empire came to an end and the Sikh raids in the Ganga Doāb ceased to a large extent.

The Sikh depredations in the district of Saharanpur continued for some time more in a secret manner: "Some idea of the damage done by the Sikhs may be estimated from the fact that in 1805 the loss of revenue caused by the destruction of crops in the Saharanpur district as it then stood, and exclusive of the parganas under the Resident at Delhi, was estimated Rs. 86,905 without counting the cultivators' shares of the profit and the plundering of cattle. In July, 1805 the Collector wrote: 'The loss in cattle sustained by the Zamindars in these parganas near the Jamuna is ruinous in its present effects and future consequences. From the best information that I can procure the number of the cattle driven away from the district by the Sikhs amounts to 30,000. Besides this, a large number of villages were plundered or burnt and contributions in money and grain were extorted by the Sikhs. This naturally resulted in a state of depression owing to the loss of stock and capital which could not be quickly replaced, so that it was many years before all traces of the misrule that prevailed before the conquest can be said to have been eradicated." Keene observed: "It took more than two generations for the district of Saharanpur to recover in some measure from the effects of the devastation."[3]

[1] Hugh Pearse, 51; *Rajas*, 89-90.
[2] *Muzaffarnagar District Gazetteer*, 128.
[3] *Hindustan under Free Lances*, 36.

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CHAPTER 19

The Sikh Relations with their Neighbours, 1764-1803

MARATHAS

The first Sikh-Maratha contact in the Panjab, March-April, 1758

Ahmad Shah Abdali had conquered Punjab and Kashmir in 1752. In 1757 he annexed the Sarhind province lying between the rivers Satluj and Jamuna. In that year his young son Timur Shah was appointed viceroy of the Panjab. The Abdali commander-in-chief, Jahan Khan, was entrusted with the guardianship of the Prince as well as with the actual administration of the province.

At that time the Sikhs were rising to power in the Panjab. Their aim was to win independence and establish their own rule in their homeland. Jahan Khan could not tolerate it. He persecuted the Sikhs to the utmost. He beat their saint, Guru Wadbhag Singh of Kartarpur, 15 kms west of Jullundur, almost to death. His disciples removed the Sodhi Guru into the hills north of Hoshiarpur, and the entire Sikh community rose against the Afghan rule.

The governor of the Jullundur Doāb was a Panjabi Muslim, Adina Beg Khan. He was an experienced and able administrator. He was on the whole successful in maintaining peace and order in the territory under his charge. Jahan Khan summoned him to Lahore. Adina Beg was afraid of him. On one occasion Jahan Khan had beaten with a stick the famous Mughlani Begam, ex-governor of Panjab, whom Ahmad Shah Abdali used to call his daughter. Adina Beg knew it, and made one excuse or the other to avoid visiting Lahore. Jahan Khan sent a force to seize Adina Beg Khan. He fled to the hills and joined Sodhi Wadbhag Singh. All this took place in November-December,[1] 1757.

[1]Tahmas Khan Miskin, *Tazkirah*, 145, 165; Ghulam Ali Azad, *Khazana-e Amira*, 100; Sayyid Ghulam Husain, *Siyar-ul-Mutakhirin*, III, 63.

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Adina Beg Khan was a pastmaster in intrigues. He formed a plan in consultation with the Sodhi Guru to expel the Afghans from the Panjab. He had a small force of his own, numbering about 5,000 men. The Sodhi offered him the services of 15,000 Sikhs. This much of force was insufficient to fight against the Durrani commander-in-chief. Consequently Adina Beg's fertile brain hit upon another plan.

In January, 1758, a large Maratha army, numbering about 50,000, lay encamped at Delhi. It was under command of Peshwa's younger brother Raghunath Rao. Adina Beg invited him to conquer the Panjab and extend their empire up to the banks of river Indus. As the Marathas in those days were a greedy people, Adina Beg Khan offered Raghunath Rao one lakh of rupees for every day of marching and Rs. 50,000 for halting. Further he promised military help of 5,000 of his own soldiers and 15,000 Sikhs.[1]

Raghunath Rao readily accepted the invitation. He arrived near Sarhind on March 8, 1758. Adina Beg and the Sikhs joined him. Sarhind was immediately attacked. The Abdali governor, Abdus Samad Khan, put up a stiff resistance. Eventually he was overpowered and taken prisoner on March 21. The town was thoroughly sacked. A contemporary writer stated: "None, either male or female, had a cloth on his or her person left. They pulled down the houses and carried off timber. They dug out floors and seized whatever they could lay their hands on."[2] As the Sikhs were familiar with the town, they plundered its richest parts and secured the lion's share in the booty. The Marathas demanded half of it. The Sikhs turned down the demand. Fighting between the Marathas and the Sikhs broke out, but it was cleverly stopped by Adina Beg Khan. He prevailed upon the Sikhs to remain ahead of the Marathas while on a march by about 40 kms.[3]

The Marathas found that the Sikhs individually as well as collectively possessed a spirit of independence and boldness of manners which did not exist anywhere else in India. Hence after this

[1]Miskin, 167-68; *Khazana-e-Amila*, 100; Harcharan Das, *Chahar Gulzar-e-Shujai*, 463b; Sayyid Imam-ud-din Husaini, *Tarikh-e-Husain Shahi*, 43; *Siyar*, III, 64.

[2]*Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 311; Miskin, 173; *S.P.D.*, XXVII, 220; *Khazana-e-Amira*, 101; Harcharan Das, 877.

[3]*Tazkirah-e-Imad-ul-Mulk*, 379-80; Ratan Singh Bhangu, 423-24.

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they kept on good terms with them.

When Jahan Khan learnt about the fall of Sarhind and the Maratha advance, he hurriedly evacuated Lahore on April 9, 1758. The Sikhs and Maratha-advance-guard reached the city the following morning. On that day Adina Beg and Raghunath Rao arrived at Amritsar. The Sikh leaders visited the Maratha chief who conferred robes of honour on them. Then Raghunath Rao paid homage at Hari Mandar, and conferred robes of honour on the officials of the Temple.[1]

The Sikhs and Marathas pursued the fleeing Afghans, and overtook them on the eastern bank of river Chenab. Timur Shah and Jahan Khan hurriedly crossed the river in boats. The Afghan camp was plundered, and the booty was brought to Lahore in several trips. A large number of Afghans were captured. The Sikhs employed them in cleaning the holy tank of Amritsar filled by Jahan Khan with refuse and rubbish, and in rebuilding the edifices demolished by them.[2]

Raghunath Rao did not like to stay in the Panjab. He appointed Adina Beg Khan viceroy of the Panjab for an annual tribute of Rs. 75 lakhs, and himself retired towards Maharashtra.

The second contact in the Panjab, October-November, 1759

Raghunath Rao had left 6,000 Marathas in Panjab; 4,000 of them were at Attock and 2,000 at Multan, to guard against Ahmad Shah Abdali's invasion. Adina Beg died on September 15, 1758. Ahmad Shah Abdali could not bear the loss of the Panjab, the most valuable province of his kingdom. In October, 1759 he marched from Kandhar at the head of a huge army of ferocious Afghans for a religious war against the Kafirs or infidels. The Maratha's at Attock were completely destroyed. The Multan garrison marched back towards Delhi. On their way back they were frequently attacked by the warlike local Muslim population between Multan and Lahore. From Lahore to Thanesar the Sikh bands fell upon them declaring them as cowards. On November 23, 1759, only 500 Marathas, without horses, camels, arms, belongings and even clothes, naked above the waist shivering with cold and hunger reached the Jamuna.[3]

[1]Ali-ud-din, 255.
[2]*Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 312; Miskin, 178-79.
[3]Rajwade, 1-46.

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Sabaji, the Maratha chief at Lahore, had fled to Delhi. The Durrani seized the Panjab and advanced farther.

Afghan skirmishes with Marathas

A small Maratha force of 400 men was cut to pieces at Taraori near Karnal on December 24, 1759. On crossing the Jamuna the Abdali was joined by his lieutenant, the Rohilla chief Najib-ud-daulah, at Saharanpur. Other Rohilla sardars also joined him in their march to Delhi. Dattaji Sindhia was slain at Barari Ghat on the Jamuna near Delhi on January 9, 1760. Another Maratha force under Malhar Rao Holkar was routed at Sikandarabad on March 4, 1760.

Maratha army at Panipat

The Peshwa Balaji Baji Rao despatched a large Maratha army from Poona under Sdashiv Rao Bhau to oppose the Durrani. Both the armies encamped at Panipat towards the close of October, 1760. In course of time the Abdali surrounded the Maratha camp so closely that all ways of going out and coming in were completely blocked. Starvation stared the Marathas in the face in December, 1760. Their men and animals began to die of cold and hunger in thousands.

Alha Singh's help to the Marathas at Panipat, December, 1760

At this time Alha Singh was the chief of Patiala which was about 130 kms from Panipat. The borders of his State from Panipat were near. On hearing of the hardships of the Marathas he began sending supplies of grain and other things secretly at night by the jungle paths not frequented by people. It was paid for by ready cash. It came to the notice of the Abdali. He immediately sent an Afghan contingent to punish Alha Singh. He was then at Munak collecting supplies for Marathas. His capital at Barnala was under the charge of his wife, Rani Fatto, a lady of remarkable daring and diplomacy. She sought peace with the Shah and undertook not to give any offence to him in future. Four leading courtiers were sent to Panipat with rich presents to tender apologies. Meanwhile Barnala was plundered. They retired on receiving a sum of four lakhs of rupees as a penalty.

The Marathas were defeated on January 14, 1761, and almost

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the entire army of two lakhs was destroyed. Hundreds of Marathas who managed to escape took shelter in the neighbouring villages of the Patiala State.[1]

Sikhs and Marathas join against Najib, 1765

Surajmal, the famous Jat Raja of Bharatpur, was killed in a battle with Najib-ud-daulah at Delhi in December, 1763. His son Jawahir Singh employed a large force of 15,000 Sikhs to fight against Najib. A Maratha force was also hired for the same purpose. Thus the Sikhs and Marathas fought against a common enemy. The Marathas were posted on the eastern bank of the Jamuna and the Sikhs on the western bank. A number of engagements took place in January-February, 1765.[2]

On opposite sides at Jaipur, 1765

In December, 1765 the Sikhs and Marathas fought on opposite sides at Jaipur. Jawahir Singh, the Jat Raja of Bharatpur, led an expedition against Jaipur. Jawahir Singh took a force of the Sikhs into his pay. The Jaipur Raja invited Marathas for help. Both fought against each other for some time. Then the Raja of Jaipur offered a heavy bribe to the Sikhs. On receiving it they withdrew from the battlefield.[3]

The battle of Dholpur, March, 1766

Having lost the battle against Jaipur Jawahir Singh withdrew to his own territory. The Marathas pursued him in order to plunder his territory and acquire a large booty. Jawahir Singh again invited 7 to 8 thousand Sikhs to fight the Marathas. A battle took place near Dholpur on March 13-14, 1766. The Marathas were defeated. Several hundred Maratha horses with empty saddles as their riders had been killed were captured by the Sikhs. A number of commanders and many soldiers were taken prisoners. Malhar Rao Holkar escaped beyond the Chambal.[4]

[1] *S.P.D.*, XXIX, 27; Rajwade, I, 268; *Khazanah-e-Amira*, 107; *Tarikh-e-Muzaffari*, 113a; *Tarikh-e-Patiala*, 55-57.

[2] Munna Lal, 93; Father Wendel, 97; Miskin, 264, puts the number of Sikhs at 20,000; Nur-ud-din, 82b-85b.

[3] *S.P.D.*, XXIX, 99, 102, 121, 128, 133; Nur-ud-din, 100b-109b; Harcharan Das, 485.

[4] *S.P.D.*, XXIX, 126, 127.

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The battle of Kumbher, January-February, 1770

Jawahir Singh died in June, 1768. His younger brother Ratan Singh succeeded him. He was murdered by his Brahman priest Gosain Rupanand on April 8, 1769. The other two brothers, Nawal Singh and Ranjit Singh, contested the throne. Nawal Singh won, while Ranjit Singh fled away to Kumbher. He invited the Sikhs for help. Nawal Singh engaged the Marathas to fight for him.

On January 26, 1770, Jats and Marathas delivered an attack on the Sikhs. After a few hours' fight, the Sikhs, according to their common practice, took to flight. Nawal Singh's army began to pursue them. Ahead of all was Rene Madec, a French commander. Gopal Rao was behind him. Madec's force consisted of six companies of light horse and two pieces of cannon, one four and the other two-pounder. In the rear there was Nawal Singh himself, 6 kms distant.

The Sikhs suddenly came to a halt. A bloody battle was fought on 24 February. The Maratha cavalry was cut to pieces. Gopal Rao was severely wounded. Madec suffered heavily. Then the Sikhs seized one piece of cannon, and retired to the Panjab.[1]

Gopal Rao bribes the Sikhs, June, 1781

The Sikhs of the Cis-Satluj region were frequently plundering the crownlands situated on both sides of river Jamuna north of Delhi. This deprived Emperor Shah Alam II of his revenues. He appointed Gopal Rao Maratha to expel the Sikhs. He was given five battalions of infantry, 500 horse and two pieces of cannon. Two bodies of Sikhs, about 1,000 in all were roaming about in Meerut district. Gopal Rao settled terms with them in June, 1781, and persuaded them to retire to their own territory.[2]

Mahadji Sindhia endeavours to win over the Sikhs, January, 1785

Mahadji Sindhia, the Maratha Raja of Gwalior, was appointed Regent of the Mughal Empire with full powers by Emperor Shah Alam II in December, 1784. His main duty was to establish peace

[1]N.A.I., Calendar of Records of the Select Committee at Fort William in Bengal, dated 28 January, 1770, p. 98, paras 259, 260, 261, 269, 270; Father P. Wendel's letter, dated at Agra, March 3, 1770, in Bengal Select Committee, March 28, 1770, pp. 120-24; *S.P.D.*, XXIX, 259; *C.P.C.*, III, 129.

[2]*Dilliyethil*, I, 28, 35; Rajwade, XII, 19; Maheshwar, I, 50, 55.

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and order in the empire, and supply the Emperor the revenues of crownlands, lying in Haryana and U.P. These lands were raided by the Sikhs twice a year to realize *Rākhi* for themselves.

Sindhia knew the fighting qualities of the Sikhs. He, therefore, decided to win them over to his side. He deputed his agents to their chiefs, and invited their vakils to meet him in the beginning of January, 1785. He advised them to stop their raids into the crownlands. He offered them jagirs and to take 5,000 Sikhs in his army. The vakils were dismissed about the end of January with valuable presents for their masters.

Then Mahadji deputed Pratap Singh, Raja of Alwar, to persuade the Sikh sardars of the Cis-Satluj region to accept these terms.

In diplomatic skill Baghel Singh of Chhalondi stood unrivalled. Sindhia made him a personal fervent appeal through his envoy Rormal.

Sindhia also won over the celebrated Begam Samru by granting her several parganahs contiguous to Sikh country to make her territory a buffer.

The condition of the country at this time can be realized from a letter written by Sadashiv Dinkar, the Peshwa's agent at Delhi to Nana Fadnavis in February, 1785: "The Emperor rules inside the city, while outside the Sikhs are supreme."

Ambaji Ingle's provisional treaty with the Sikhs, March 30, 1785

In March, 1785, Mahadji Sindhia deputed his special envoy and best general, Ambaji Ingle, to settle terms of peace with the Sikhs. At his invitation 12,000 Sikhs under their leaders encamped at Ganaur, 60 kms north of Delhi. Ingle halted at Bakhtawarpur, 20 kms north of Delhi. Accompanied by a few soldiers he called at the Sikh camp, and held discussions with the Sikh chiefs. He was honoured with a *saropa* or *khilat*. Two Sikh Sardars, Mohar Singh and Dulha Singh, accompanied him to Bakhtawarpur. They were granted robes of honour. The following provisional treaty was settled with them for the approval of Mahadji Sindhia:

The preamble stated: Raja Ambaji on one side and on the other Sardars Baghel Singh, Karam Singh, Dulha Singh, Bhag Singh, Diwan Singh, Bhag Singh Dallewalia and Mohar Singh have resolved on oath through the intervention of Maharao Pratap Singh Machhari of Alwar, to preserve unity of interests and friendship. The friends and enemies and the prosperity and adversity of

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each are mutual. Not the smallest degree of jealousy or difference subsists between them. God is witness that there shall be no deviation.

1. The Sikhs agree to forego their exaction of *Rākhi* in the crownlands which they charge at the rate of one-eighth of the produce or income.

2. The Sikh sardars will depute one or two of their representatives to Maharaja Mahadji Sindhia to settle amount of money as compensation to the Sikh chiefs, and the settlement will be accepted by them.

3. One-third of the revenues of crownlands situated on both sides of the Jamuna will be paid to those Sikh chiefs who owned Rākhi there.

4. The movement of troops will be settled by both the parties.

5. To meet any disturbance, internal or external, both the parties shall unite their forces.

Written on March 30, 1785.[1]

Ratification of the treaty by Mahadji Sindhia, May 9, 1785

This provisional treaty was to be ratified by Mahadji Sindhia. He was then encamped at Mathura from where he was sending expeditions to restore peace and order in the country. Ambaji Ingle with Mohar Singh and Dulha Singh came to Mathura. A number of meetings were held between the Maharajah and the Sikh Sardars for one month from 10 April to 9 May, 1785. The following terms were finally settled:

1. A body of 5,000 Sikh horsemen shall serve under Mahadji Sindhia.

2. The Sikh sardars shall receive allowances and a jagir worth ten lakhs of rupees a year.

3. The jagir worth 7.5 lakhs will be in the district of Karnal and the rest worth 2.5 lakhs in the crownlands of district of Sonepat.

4. The Karnal region shall be under the authority of Mahadji Sindhia.

5. If the said jagir does not yield the stipulated sum, additional jagir shall be granted to make up the deficiency.

[1] *Dilliyethil*, I, 134; Maheshwar, II, 90; Parasnis (New), 373; *C.P.C.*, VII, 212; N.A.I., *Secret Proceedings*, April 26, 1785, James Anderson to the Governor-General, dated April 11, 1785 and May 3, 1785; Sarkar, III, 309.

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6. If the Sikh force is called upon to serve the Government before the possession of the jagir, each horseman shall be paid 50 paise daily according to the actual number of troopers present until the time of the occupation of the jagir.

7. After possession of the jagir no claim of pay for the soldiers shall be entertained.

8. The Sikh sardars shall carry out the orders of the Government and will prevent their people from taking *Rākhi* from the suburbs of Delhi and the crownlands.

9. As Mahadji Sindhia was in friendship with the British East India Company and the Nawab of Oudh, the Sikhs shall not invade their territories.

10. "In this engagement God is between us, so no deviation shall ever happen."

Written on May 9, 1785 at Tilraji.

Dhar Rao helps Patiala and Jind, December, 1785-January, 1786

In December, 1785, Khushhal Singh of the Singhpuria Misl seized a number of places including Chhat and Banur belonging to the Raja of Patiala. Raja Sahib Singh deputed Diwan Nanumal to seek help from Mahadji Sindhia. He offered Rs. 5,000 as daily expenses, supply of ammunition, and a present of three lakhs of rupees. Dhar Rao was deputed to help the Raja. Dhar Rao recovered all the territories seized by Khushhal Singh who fled back into the Jullundur Doāb.

Raja Gajpat Singh of Jind died on January 18, 1786. A dispute arose between his sons, Bhag Singh and Bhup Singh, for succession. Bhup Singh sought help from Dhar Rao and surrendered Safidon to him. During negotiations Dhar Rao fell ill, and he retired to Delhi.[1]

Ambaji Ingle's expedition, 1787

In military matters the Sikhs had attained manhood, but in political matters they were still in infancy. They did not realize the importance of formal treaties and solemn agreements. They would make and break pacts in the same breath. The treaty with Mahadji

[1] *Dilliyethil*, I, 159, 160, 194; Sardesai, 431, 473; Parasnis, I, 98, 106; V, 130; Bakhtmal, 136-39; Khushwaqt Rae, 170; Bute Shah, 284b-286a; George Thomas, 105; Muhammad Hasan, 126-30.

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was made on May 9, 1785. On May 10, Sir James Anderson, British Resident at Sindhia's Court, wrote to the Governor-General that there was "little probability of a sincere union taking place between the Mahrattas and the Seiks." A Marathi despatch stated:

"The Sikhs are *beiman* (faithless). Having stayed in the camp for two months they have closely studied all about our troops."

The Sikhs gave no peace to Mahadji. They constantly raided the crownlands north of Delhi and in the upper Ganga Doāb. Mahadji who was busy fighting in Rajasthan, again deputed Ambaji Ingle to prevail upon the Sikhs to desist from such unlawful activities. Visiting on his way the holy places of Thanesar and Pehowa, Ingle arrived at Ghuram, 25 kms south of Patiala. As Sindhia was hard pressed in Rajasthan, he urgently recalled him. Ingle cut off his negotiations, returned to Delhi on 22 June, and reached Jaipur on 16 July, 1787.

The Sikhs attacked Shahdara on 23 July and plundered the country lying between Delhi and Agra. The Maratha agent Deshmukh was terrified and he fled away from Delhi on 23 August. Shyam Rao Bakhshi could not hold his position at Karnal. He handed over the charge of the district to Raja Bhag Singh of Jind, and retired. From September 5, 1787 to October 10, 1788, Delhi was held by Ghulam Qadir Rohilla. The Sikhs generally remained in alliance with him, and committed depredations on the crownlands unchecked.[1]

Rane Khan and Ali Bahadur's visit to Cis-Satluj region, March, 1789

Mahadji Sindhia was not prepared to take any action against the Sikhs. He wished to win them over to his side at any cost. In March, 1789 he deputed his two generals, Rane Khan and Ali Bahadur, to conciliate the Sikh chiefs. The Raja of Patiala was also to be brought into the alliance. They arrived at Bhunerheri, 16 kms south of Patiala.

Baghel Singh and Nanumal invited the Trans-Satluj Sikhs for

[1]*N.A.I.*, Secret Proceedings, 27 December, 1786, pp. 2155-60; 8 January, 1787, p. 69; 21 January, 1787, pp. 2161-62; 30 January, 1787, pp. 2163-67; 31, January, 1787, pp. 712-23; 5 February, 1787, pp. 2173-75; 9 March, 1787, p. 1584; 15 March, 1787, pp. 2175-78; 9 April, 1787, pp. 2142-54; 11 April, 2443-45; 13 April, 2340-41; 2 May, 2732; 20 June, 3497-3508; 2 July, 3628; General Letters to Select Committee, 1786-92; VII, 133-35, 187-89.

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help. Twelve thousand of them immediately responded to their call. In a skirmish 250 men were killed on both sides. This took place on April 15, 1789.

Confirmation of the Sikhs in crownlands, 1789

As Rane Khan had instructions to make peace with the Sikhs, he settled the following terms with them on April 15, 1789:

1. Baghel Singh was granted a large jagir on the promise that he would keep other Sikh sardars in friendship with the Marathas.
2. The Sikh chiefs who claimed *Rākhi* in the region north, west and south of Delhi to the west of river Jamuna, and in the upper Ganga Doāb were allotted certain parganahs in lieu of blackmail.
3. Other Sikh sardars were confirmed in their estates in the Doāb. For example Gurdit Singh of Ladwa was assigned Jhinjhina, Kandhla and Shamli. Bhanga Singh of Thanesar was given Bidauli, 24 kms north-east of Panipat, and Kairana. Sher Singh of Buriya was fixed at Sultanpur. Rae Singh of Jagadhri was settled in Nakur.
4. All the Sikh chiefs agreed to protect the Doāb from their own depredations as well as of other Sikhs.
5. About 1,000 Sikh collectors were allowed to be stationed in the Doāb to collect *Rākhi* from the people with the help of Maratha officers.
6. The Sikhs acknowledged the supremacy of Mahadji Sindhia and accepted their position as his feudatories.

Thus the de facto system of the Sikhs in the Upper Ganga Doāb was made de jure.[1]

The pact broke down, 1790

The Sikhs abided by the terms of the pact for less than a year. In March, 1790, they ravaged the country lying between Karnal and Sonepat. In April 12,000 Sikhs under Karam Singh Nirmala of Shahabad plundered the Doāb up to Aligarh. In November, 1790, they again created a havoc in the Doāb. From January to April, 1791, the Sikhs roamed about unchecked. On February 5, 1791, the eye-witness Khair-ud-din recorded:

[1]Parasnis, I, 167-75, 180, 188, 190; *Dilliyethil*, I, 335, 355, 356, 365, 368, 379, 380, 381, 384, 388; Maheshwar, II, 175; Sardesai, 556; *Calcutta Review*, LXI, 1875, pp. 41-43; *Muzaffarnagar District Gazetteer*, 179-80; Bakhtmal, 141-42; Gian Singh, *Panth Prakash*, 958-60.

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"The Sikhs plunder this country of crores of rupees."[1]

A Marathi despatch dated February, 1792 from Delhi stated:

"The Sikhs have blocked the highways as far as Shahdara, 3 kms distant from Delhi. They realize *rākhi* on all sides and are ravaging the villages. The Gujars and Sikhs have no check on themselves."[2]

Mahadji Sindhia died at Poona on February 12, 1794. He was succeeded by his adopted son, Daulat Rao Sindhia.

Nana Rao's expedition, September, 1795

As the Sikhs were expelling Maratha posts from both sides of the Jamuna, Nana Rao led an expedition against them in September, 1795. At Panipat he was attended by vakils of several Sikh Sardars. Nana Rao advanced to Thanesar, where Bhanga Singh fought with him. Near Rajpura on the banks of river Ghaggar he was involved in a number of skirmishes. The Sikhs in his camp began to plunder the territory of Patiala. Nana Rao was compelled to retreat to Panipat.

On his withdrawal the Sikhs entered the Doāb. The Maratha garrisons in Saharanpur "were scattered like chaff before the wind." They "cut to pieces some battalions of the Mahratta troops, stationed for the defence of that province."[3]

George Thomas fights with the Sikhs, 1795-1797

Appa Khande Rao, the Maratha Governor, despatched Geo rg Thomas, an Irish adventurer, who was then in his service. He was given charge of Sonepat-Panipat-Karnal region. Thomas had to maintain a regular fight with the Sikhs on both sides of the Jamuna throughout the period of his service under Marathas from 1795 to 1798. He recovered Shamli from Gurdit Singh of Ladwa. His artillery always proved effective and superior to the tactics of the Sikhs. Thomas gave up Maratha service in April, 1798, and settled down at Jhajjar as an independent chief. In about a year's time he set himself up as a Raja in the western half of Haryana with his capital at Hansi.[4]

[1] *Ibrat Namah*, III, 256.

[2] *Dilliyethil*, II, 28, 39, 41, 63 and Additional, 20, 54, 57, 59, 60, 71; N.A.I., Political Proceedings, 9 March, 1791, no. 25, 8 February, no. 20.

[3] George Thomas, 105; Bakhtmal, 151-71.

[4] *Memoirs of George Thomas*, 59-60; *Muzaffarnagar District Gazetteer*, 181; *Calcutta Review*, LXI, 1875, pp. 47-8; Compton, 131-32.

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The Maratha interference with the Sikhs came to an end with the British conquest of Delhi in 1803.[1]

THE ROHILLAS

The Rohillas were Yusafzai Afghans of a tract of land called Roh situated on the north-west frontier of India. It was bounded on the north by Chitral, in the west by river Helmand, on the south by Swat river and in the east by Kashmir. Some of the Afghans of this region came to India in search of bread. They were called Rohiwala or Rohilla. In the beginning of the eighteenth century they settled in a fertile and rich area north of the Ganga below Himalayas. It was about 300 kms long, 150 kms wide, area 33,000 square kms, and population predominantly Hindu numbering about sixty lakhs. The Rohillas established their supremacy over this land which came to be called Rohilkhand, though its original name was Katehr. The Rohillas were either cultivators or soldiers, and soon rose to be aggressive rulers. They were noted for their ferocious temperament. The important towns situated here are Bijnor, Sambhal, Moradabad, Rampur, Chandausi, Bareilly, Pilibhit and Shahjahanpur.[2]

Ali Muhammad, 1707-1748

Among the early settlers in Katehr was Daud Khan, a notorious freebooter. In one of his plundering raids he captured a Hindu Jat boy 7 or 8 years old in 1715 from village Bankauli in parganah Chaumahla. He adopted him as a son and named him Ali Muhammad. On Daud's death in 1721, he succeeded to his father's lands in Aonla village. He began to recruit needy Afghans from Roh. They subsisted on booty and their number rose to 40,000. Emperor Muhammad Shah conferred the title of Nawab on him, and appointed him governor of Sarhind province with the rank of 4-hazari. Ali Muhammad waged a continuous war against Alha Singh of Patiala. He was the founder of Rampur State in Rohilkhand.[3]

The following saying is still current in Rohilkhand:

Aise se aisā bhayo—dekh Prabhu ke thāth,
Aonla kā Rājā bhayo—Bankauli kā Jāt.

[1] *Dilliyethil*, II, 28, 39, 41, 63 and *Additional*, 20, 46, 55, 57, 60, 71; N.A.I., Political Proceedings, 9 March, 1791, no. 25; 8 February, 1792, no. 20.

[2] Walter Hamilton, *Geographical, Historical and Statistical Description of Hindustan and the Adjacent Countries*, I, London, 1820, p. 428.

[3] Forster, I, 115-16 ,126.

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Najib-ud-daulah, 1708-1770

The greatest leader of the Rohillas was Najib-ud-daulah who ruled over the Mughal Empire as absolute master owning nominal allegiance to the Emperor. He came to India in 1743 in search of livelihood, and took up service under Ali Muhammad as a foot-soldier on Rs. 2 per mensem. He seized the upper Ganga Doāb from Dehra Dun to Meerut and established a Muslim colony at Jawalapur close to Hardwar to defile the sanctity of the holy place by killing cows for beef. He was a bitter enemy of Hindu nationalism. In 1757 he prevailed upon Ahmad Shah Abdali to suppress the power of Surajmal, the Jat Raja of Bharatpur. In this campaign about fifty thousand Hindus, men, women and children, were destroyed, and the whole country lying between Delhi and Agra was entirely laid waste. Najib was solely responsible for the destruction of about two lakhs of Marathas in the third battle of Panipat.

In January, 1764, the Sikhs conquered Sarhind province and numerous Sikh sardars occupied the whole area lying between the rivers Satluj and Jamuna extending from Shiwalik hills to Karnal and Panipat upto Firozpur. One month later they entered the Ganga Doāb and began plundering Najib's country. Najib was at Delhi and was expecting an attack from the Jat Raja Jawahir Singh for having killed his father Surajmal. He came to drive away the Sikhs, but they eluded him. Nur-ud-din, the biographer of Najib, stated that the Sikhs seized enormous booty in gold, jewellery and coins, and took male captives for ransom. He, therefore, bought them off by paying a blackmail of eleven lakhs of rupees.[1]

Jawahir Singh besieged Najib in Delhi in November, 1764. Jawahir hired about 12,000 Sikhs in January, 1765. They fought against Najib for some time. Then they suddenly left him to oppose Ahmad Shah Abdali who was advancing towards Delhi. They checked his progress and compelled him to retire from Kunjpura.

In October, 1765, a body of the Sikhs about 25,000 strong, invaded Najib's territory in Saharanpur and Muzaffarnagar districts. The Raja of Bhatner and Raja Amar Singh of Patiala came to help Najib in expelling the Sikhs, who retired to celebrate the Diwali at Amritsar, which fell on 14 October.[2]

[1]Nur-ud-din, *Tarikh-e-Najib-ud-daulah*, 1773, 72a-b; *S.P.D.*, XXIX, 55; Miskin, 266; Williams in *Calcutta Review*, LX, 1875, p. 26; Sarkar, *Fall*, original edition, II, 493.

[2]Nur-ud-din, 100a, *S.P.D.*, XXIX, 99, 102; *C.P.C.*, 11, 2735, 2735A, B, C andD, all dated 3.11.1765

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Soon after the Diwali celebration the Sikhs made for Delhi. They plundered Najib's villages in the districts of Sonepat and Rohtak. Najib engaged them frequently in skirmishes. The Sikhs plied musketry from sugarcane fields and mango groves, yelling Wah Guru, Wah Guru. This sort of warfare lasted for nearly six months. The Sikhs attacked Delhi in April, 1766. Najib's lieutenant, Afzal Khan, proclaimed by the beat of drum on 15 April advising people not to visit Kalka Devi. On 17 April Sikhs looted rice, gur and shakkar in the Patparganj mart. Najib pursued them. They marched along the eastern bank of the Jamuna, and raided Kutana, Jhinjhina, Budhana and many other places. In one engagement Najib defeated the Sikhs, and seized a good deal of their booty including milch cattle, oxen and captive men.[1]

In the winter of 1766 Ahmad Shah Abdali again invaded India. Najib joined him on his return journey. Though Amar Singh of Patiala always supported Najib against his Sikh brethren, he tried to seize Patiala territory as well as the Raja. With the Abdali's help he got about 5,000 Sikhs killed in March-April, 1767 in the hills of Mani Majra, Rupar, Kirtarpur and Anandpur.

By way of retaliation a strong body of the Sikhs invaded Najib's country in the Ganga Doāb in the beginning of May, 1767. Najib and Abdali were staying at Machhiwara on the Satluj. The Sikhs sacked many places including Nanautah and Meerut. Abdali sent a force under Jahan Khan and Zabita Khan, son of Najib. They covered 300 kms in three days and fell upon the Sikhs like lightning. The Sikhs rushed back and crossed over the Jamuna. The rest heavily laden with booty fought hard. According to Miskin who was present in Zabita Khan's army about 9,000 Sikhs were slaughtered. They returned to Machhiwara in seven days.[2]

In December, 1767, the Sikhs again raided Najib's country. They were hotly pursued and forced to retire by Najib across the Jamuna.[3] In January, 1768, the Sikhs marched upon Delhi, and stopped convoys of grain coming from Ghaziabad side. They lay encamped at Jalalabad, 16 kms north-east of Ghaziabad. Najib opened artillery fire upon them. Najib was in the rear riding on an elephant. The Sikhs threw his advance-guard into confusion, and

[1]Nur-u-din, 108a-109b; *Delhi Chronicle*, 207-8.

[2]Miskin, 264-68; *C.P.C.*, II, 412; Nur-ud-din, 111a-112b; G.R.C. Williams in *Calcutta Review* January, 1875, p. 27.

[3]*Delhi Chronicle*, 214-15; Williams in, *Calcutta Review*, January, 1875, p. 28.

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rushed upon Najib. Just at this moment reinforcements arrived. The Sikhs were ultimately repulsed, though many notable commanders were killed in Najib's army.[1]

The Sikhs did not give any rest to Najib. In three years, 1764-67, the Sikhs had reduced Najib's revenues from one crore to seventy lakhs.[2] They again erupted into the imperial domains north of Karnal in Haryana. Najib came from Delhi to punish them, but was defeated. The Sikhs hurried towards Delhi committing depredations all the way. Najib fought an action near Delhi, but was again repulsed. He felt so much frustrated that like the Hindu sadhus he thought of spending his last days at Mecca or at some obscure retreat.[3] He informed the Queen-Mother residing in Red Fort that he was helpless against the Sikhs. He wrote to Emperor Shah Alam II, then living at Allahabad, to take charge of his capital and relieve him of his post as Regent. He said he could not make any stand against the Sikhs, though he had saved his empire earlier from the usurpation by the Jats and the Marathas. In a fit of despair he left the capital to its fate, and himself retired to Najibabad.[4]

In December, 1768, the Sikhs ravaged the upper Ganga Doāb, and defeated Najib. Their raids continued unabated in 1769 and 1770. Najib's will power was shattered against a nation in arms and growing like ants and locusts. He was now a broken man both in mind and body, and passed away on October 31, 1770 at the age of sixty-two. He was indeed the greatest Muslim leader after Ahmad Shah Abdali and Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf Jah in the eighteenth century.[5]

Zabita Khan, 1770-1785

Zabita Khan was the eldest son of Najib-ud-daulah. He inherited a huge fortune and a rich territory lying on both sides of the Ganga, commanded by four forts of Pathargarh at Najibabad, Saharanpur, Ghausgarh and Sukkartal. Emperor Shah Alam II conferred upon him his father's title of Amir-ul-Umara, and the office of Mir Bakhshi or head of the army.

The Sikhs ravaged the districts of Saharanpur, Muzaffarnagar

[1]*C.P.C.*, II, 776.
[2]Forster, I, 148-49.
[3]*C.P.C.*, II, 847.
[4]ibid, 846, 847, 849, 1101; *S.P.D.*, XXIX, 143.
[5]Miskin, 272; Nur-ud-din, 123a; Sarkar, *Fall*, II, 414-15.

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and Meerut in December, 1773. Zabita Khan was so much overawed that he did not come out of his fort of Ghausgarh, 30 kms. north-west of Muzaffarnagar and 22 kms north-east of Shamli. In April, 1775, the Sikhs came again and Zabita Khan saved himself by paying a blackmail of Rs. 50,000. Their next invasion took place in May, 1776. The agents of Shuja-ud-daulah, the Nawab of Oudh, offered the Sikhs a sum of 14 lakhs of rupees and one-half of the revenues every year if the Sikhs would expel Zabita Khan from the Ganga Doāb and establish Nawab's authority there. The Sikhs did not agree.[1]

Zabita Khan usurped the crownlands and did not pay any revenues for them. The Emperor led an army against him. Zabita had a force of 15,000 men, and recruited 7,000 Sikhs for the occasion. He was besieged at Ghausgarh which was protected by three Afghan strongholds of Jalalabad in the north, Lohari in the east and Thana Bhavan in the west, each side being 5 kms long. In the campaign which lasted from May to September, 1777, he was defeated, and his entire camp, treasures and family fell into imperial hands. Zabita Khan all alone and without anything except the clothes he wore escaped into the camp of the Sikhs who immediately sent him into their territory on the other side of the Jamuna. In order to preserve his safety, he publicly embraced Sikh religion and adopted the name of Dharam Singh. This led to the following saying:

Ek Guru kā do chelā
Ādhā Sikh ādhā Rohillā

(The Guru's one disciple was half Sikh and half Rohilla.)

Zabita lived under Sikh protection for nearly a year. Then they appealed to Najaf Khan, the Regent of the Mughal Empire, to pardon him. His entire property and family retained in the Agra fort, as well as his territory were restored in September, 1778. Out of gratitude he gave away his daughter in marriage to Najaf Khan. The Sikhs regularly realized rākhi from the Ganga Doāb at the rate of 4 or 5 per cent of the gross produce or income or one-eighth of the fixed government revenues. Zabita Khan died on January 21, 1785.[2]

[1] *C.P.C.*, V, 279, 280.

[2] Munna Lal, *Tarikh-e-Shah Alam*, 190; *C.P.C.*, V, 687; Khair-ud-din, *Ibrat Namah*, I, 324-42. Miskin, 336-38; Ghulam Ali, *Shah Alam Namah*, III, 130-31; Forster, *Journey*, I, 325; Cunningham, 117.

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Mallu Khan

Mallu Khan was a younger son of Najib-ud-daulah. He had also fled along with Zabita Khan into the Sikh camp in September, 1777, and was living under their protection. When Zabita Khan submitted to Najaf Khan and married his daughter to him, Najaf's rival at the Mughal court, Abdul Ahad Khan, was stung to fury on account of jealousy. In September, 1778, the Sikhs had gone to the capital along with Mallu Khan, and lay encamped in the garden of Yaqub Ali Khan. Abdul Ahad formed a plan as a counterpoise against Najaf Khan. He was in the confidence of Emperor Shah Alam on account of his glib tongue. He proposed to the Emperor that the title of Najib-ud-daulah II might be conferred upon Mallu Khan. This would please the Sikhs, and they would become loyal supporters, he said. On September 29, 1778, Abdul Ahad called on the Sikhs, and conferred robes of honour on their chiefs on behalf of the Emperor. The Sikhs celebrated the Dasahra which fell on Ist October, 1778, by demolishing a mosque situated close to the "Guru's Bangla" now known as Gurdwara Bangla Sahib.[1]

Ghulam Qadir

Zabita Khan's son and successor was Ghulam Qadir. He was of a rebellious and ungrateful nature. Once he had revolted against his father, and had taken shelter in Mahadji Sindhia's camp. On his death he imprisoned his mother to squeeze his father's treasure from her. He coerced his uncles in order to seize their property. He defied the Emperor's authority, and refused to pay him succession duty. He demanded the high offices of Mir Bakhshi and Amir-ul-Umara held by his father and grandfather. On his refusal he entered the palace, tortured princes, insulted princesses, threw down the Emperor on the ground, sat on his breast, and took out his eyes with his own dagger. He was arrested by Mahadji Sindhia and was executed.

As regards his relations with the Sikhs, they were hovering in the upper Ganga Doāb at the time of his father's death. The Sikhs demanded the tribute due from his father. Ghulam Qadir promised to pay on their withdrawal to their country on the other side of the Jamuna. On account of the grief in the family and out of regard for the deceased who once had embraced Sikhism, the Sikhs with-

[1]*Delhi Chronicle* in Sarkar, *Fall*, III, 173.

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drew to their homes. Ghulam Qadir paid nothing. Having waited in vain for two years the Sikhs made a run at his territory in February, 1787, demanding all the arrears of *rākhi*. Ghulam Qadir made a part payment.

When the Sikhs were away to the Ganga Doāb, Ambaji Ingle launched an assault on the Sikh estates in the Cis-Satluj region. Ghulam Qadir joined him. The Marathas and Rohillas made for Patiala. Diwan Nanumal, chief minister of Patiala, secretly won over Ghulam Qadir by paying him Rs. 20,000 on the condition of his immediate withdrawal. Ghulam Qadir left the Maratha camp on June 4, 1787, and retired across the Jamuna. Ghulam Qadir was hanged by Mahadji Sindhia on March 4, 1789.[1]

Bhambu Khan

Ghulam Qadir's mother and her younger son Bhambu Khan, for fear of Mahadji, fled into the Sikh country and took shelter with Jassa Singh Ramgarhia. He gave them protection in his Talwara fort, and granted them five villages in Jagir for their maintenance worth Rs 7,000 a year. Mahadji Sindhia, the Nawab of Oudh and the British Government tried their best to secure the persons of these two refugees, but Jassa Singh gave a flat refusal. Sayyid Imam-ud-din Husaini, the author of *Tarikh-e-Husain Shahi*, saw Bhambu Khan living with Jassa Singh in 1796.[2] Bhambu Khan joined the British in their war against Sindhia and Bhonsle in 1803.

THE JATS

The Jats are found all over northern India extending from river Indus to river Chambal. From the Indus to the Ravi they are Muslims, from Ravi to the Ghaggar they are Sikhs, and from the Ghaggar to the Chambal they are Hindus, in the proportion of 8:6:9. The Jat is honest, sincere, industrious and as sturdy as a Pathan or Baluch of the frontier. The Jats formed the backbone of the land-owning classes. Ibbetson in the Census Report of 1881 compared the character of the Jats thus:

[1] *Delhi Chronicle*, 382-83; *Tarikh-e-Muzeffari*, 222a-b; *Dilliyethil*, I, 278, 283; Parasnis, I, 173-75; *Poona Residency Correspondence*, I, 227-35; Williams in *Calcutta Review*, LXI, 1875, p. 41; Sarkar, III, 434.

[2] *Husain Shahi*, 240; Khushwaqt Rae, 117.

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"Jats are either Muhammadan, Hindus or Sikhs by religion. The Muhammadan Jat is markedly inferior to the other two as a cultivator. He is more lazy—he is not distinguished by either industry or thrift. The Sikh Jat is by far the best cultivator of the three. He is industrious by nature and his love of money is keen spur to exertion,——. The Hindu Jat is not so industrious or self-reliant as the Sikh, but he is decidedly superior to the Muhammadan."[1] The Hindu Jats were the first to create a kingdom of their own. The Sikhs followed them about three quarters of a century later. The Muslim Jats could create nothing. The headquarters of the Hindu Jat kingdom was at Bharatpur.

With Jawahir Singh at Delhi, 1765

The earliest contact between the Sikhs and the Jats was made after the Sikh conquest of the Sarhind province in January, 1764. Surajmal, the greatest of the Jat Rajas, was killed in a battle with Najib-ud-daulah at Delhi on December 25, 1763. His youthful son Jawahir Singh wanted to retaliate. In addition to his own force he recruited Marathas and decided to hire Sikhs also. In the beginning of January, 1765, the Sikhs lay encamped at Barari Ghat on the Jamuna 20 kms north of Delhi. Jawahir Singh fixed an interview with them. He forded the Jamuna on an elephant. He was stopped outside the Sikh camp and was forced to walk. His huqqa-bearer was driven away with insult and abuse. Jawahir Singh was then led into the assembly of about one hundred Sikh sardars. They received him sitting. The meeting began with a prayer called Ardās by Sikhs. In it they said:

"Jawahir Singh, son of Surajmal, has come under the Khalsa Jio and become a Sikh of Nanak. He is demanding redress for his father's blood. So help us Wah Guru:"[2]

Jawahir Singh enlisted 12 to 15 thousand Sikhs. They were divided into two bodies. One force was to fight Najib from the north, while the other was to ravage Najib's villages to the west of Delhi, in order to cut off his food supplies. Alha Singh of Patiala sent a contingent of 1,000 Sikhs under Bhola Singh to fight on the side of Najib against Jawahir Singh. The fighting went on for twenty days.

[1]Ibbetson, *Census Report*, 1881, Paragraph 198; *Sialkot District Gazetteer*, 1894-95, p. 61.

[2]Nur-ud-din, 82b-83a; Sarkar, II, 465.

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On January 9, 1765, Najib was defeated, and he retired into the Red Fort. Jawahir Singh occupied the city. On January 25, 1765, the Sikhs fought a fierce battle on the hill near Nakhas or Horse Market and in Sabzi Mandi. Just at this time news arrived that Ahmad Shah Abdali had invaded Panjab. The Sikhs immediately left their posts and without even taking leave of Jawahir Singh hurried to oppose the invader.[1]

At Rewari, Jaipur, and Dholpur, 1765-1766

The Sikhs in their usual expeditions marched from Saharanpur to Delhi and then to Rewari, ravaging all the way. It was in December, 1765. Jawahir Singh was then fighting against Raja Madho Singh of Jaipur. He hired 25,000 Sikhs under the command of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. Madho Singh invited Marathas for help. Jawahir Singh feared a Maratha attack on Bharatpur. He made peace with Jaipur, paid a subsidy to the Sikhs and let them off.[2]

After retiring from Jaipur, Jawahir Singh attacked Dholpur which was under his step-brother Nahar Singh. Jawahir Singh took into his pay about 7,000 Sikhs, while Nahar Singh engaged Marathas. A severe battle was fought between Sikhs and Marathas on 13-14 March, 1766, in which Marathas were badly defeated. They deserted Nahar Singh who took shelter with Madho Singh of Jaipur. The Raja bribed the Sikhs who leaving Jawahir retired to the Panjab.[3]

At Kama, 1768

Jawahir Singh fought a furious battle with Madho Singh of Jaipur in December, 1767, at Maonda, 37 kms south-west of Narnaul in which the Rajputs lost about 3,000 men and Jats nearly 2,000. Jawahir Singh had in his service the trained battalions equipped with artillery under two European officers, Walter Reinhard or Sombre called Samru, husband of the famous Begam Samru, and Rene Madec. Madho Singh reorganised his army and got ready to invade the Jat country. At the head of 16,000 men he penetrated into Jawahir Singh's kingdom. Jawahir Singh recruited 10,000 Sikhs. A desperate engagement took place at Kama on February 29, 1768. Jawahir Singh lost the day with 400 of his men having

[1]Nur-ud-din, 84b-85b, 92a-b; *C.P.C.*, I. 2533A; *Delhi Chronicle*, 200; Karam Singh, *Maharajah Alha Singh*, 232 (Gurmukhi).

[2]*S.P.D.*, XXVII, 109; XXIX, 92, 99, 102, 105, 107; Sarkar, II, 471.

[3]ibid, 117, 121, 126, 127, 158, 197, 204.

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been killed. The Jats and Sikhs took to flight, Jawahir Singh added 10,000 more Sikhs, total 20,000 at seven lakh rupees per mensem. When he again advanced to face Madho Singh, the Rajputs took to their heels.[1]

Under Ranjit Singh at Aligarh and Chunar, 1770

On the death of Jawahir Singh in June, 1768, his younger brother Ratan Singh succeeded him. He was murdered in April, 1769. The throne was contested by his two brothers, Nawal Singh and Ranjit Singh. Nawal Singh seized Bharatpur, the capital of the kingdom, while Ranjit Singh occupied Kumbher. Nawal Singh invaded Kumbher. Ranjit Singh called in the Sikhs for help, while Nawal Singh sought Maratha assistance. The Sikhs advanced from their lands in the Cis-Satluj region. They arrived near Aligarh on January 26, 1770. Nawal Singh marched to oppose them. The rumour of their ferocity so terrified him that he fled away without even meeting them. The Sikhs pursued him, plundering and ravaging all the way. They reached Chunar, 748 kms from Delhi and 32 kms before Mughal Sarai.

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Nawal Singh and the Sikhs

Sombre or Samru in order to bring about peace between the Sikhs and Nawal Singh opened discussions on February 8, 1770. Negotiations lasted for a fortnight and failed. The Sikhs marched back laying waste the Jat country. In order to check their ravages, the Jat army followed the Sikhs. It was divided into three parts. The advance-guard was under Rene Madec and Gopal Rao Maratha. The main body under Nawal Singh was a little way behind them. The rear-guard was far behind to serve as a reserve force in case of an emergency. They had not gone far when the Sikhs found that the Jat vanguard was very close to them, almost at their heels, while their main body was 6 kms distant. The Sikhs, 20,000 strong, suddenly came to a halt and in the twinkling of an eye surrounded the French and Maratha generals on all sides. The battle began at 9 o'clock in the morning on February 24, 1770. The entire Maratha cavalry was cut to pieces. Gopal Rao was wounded. Madec's men

[1]Rene Madec, 49-50; Father Wendel, 108; *Chahar Gulzar-e-Shujai*, 495a-b; *S.P.D.*, XXIX, 84, 192; *C.P.C.*, II, 789, 835; Sarkar, II, 478-80; K.R. Qanungo, *History of the Jats*, 213-18.

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rushed into a village nearby and took shelter in the houses. The Sikhs laid siege to the village. The battle commenced again. Almost all the men of Rene Madec perished. Their horses were either killed or captured. They siezed one piece of cannon. At this time the main body joined the battle. The struggle lasted upto 4 o'clock in the afternoon. The Sikhs then raised the siege, and began to retreat. The Jat army pursued them for 15 kms farther, and captured some of the animals and baggage left by the Sikhs on their route. The pursuit was then given up.

In this battle all the Jat chiefs were wounded. Only the French general Rene Madec remained safe; but of his six companies three were completely wiped out.[1]

THE RAJPUTS

Guru Hari Krishan

The earliest contact between the Sikhs and Rajputs began when Aurangzeb summoned the eighth Guru, Hari Krishan, to Delhi. He was escorted from Kirtarpur to the imperial capital by men sent by Mirza Raja Jai Singh of Jaipur under his personal assurance for Guru's security. The Guru and his party were lodged in one of the Raja's palaces now known as Bangla Sahib in Jaisinghpura, then a suburb of Delhi. While staying there the young Guru died of smallpox on March 30, 1664

Guru Tegh Bahadur

Aurangzeb summoned the ninth Guru, Tegh Bahadur, to Delhi. He was imprisoned. Prince Ram Singh, son of Mirza Raja Jai Singh, was in attendance at the Mughal Court. He interceded on behalf of the Guru and secured his release. Later on when Ram Singh was sent to conquer Assam, he took Guru Tegh Bahadur with him. He remained there for about four years and a half.

Guru Gobind Singh

Emperor Bahadur Shah left Agra for the Deccan through Rajasthan on November 2, 1707. Guru Gobind Singh and Sawai Jai Singh of Jaipur followed him. Ajit Singh of Jodhpur and Durga

[1]National Archives of India, Bengal Select Committee, February 16, 1770, p. 70; Calendar of Records, paragraph, 275.

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Das joined the Emperor's camp on February 15, 1708. The Guru came into close contact with these Rajput leaders. The Guru's foster son, 14 years old, named Zorawar[1] Singh by Sainapat, a son of a carpenter of Basi Pathanan near Sarhind,[2] was killed in a fight at the gate of the Chitor fort, on April 3, 1708.[3] The Rajputs and Guru Gobind Singh lived together upto April 20, 1708, when the Rajputs escaped from the royal camp.

Banda Bahadur

Guru Gobind Singh sent Banda Bahadur from the Deccan to the Panjab. He passed through Rajasthan and seems to have met the Rajput princes of Mewar, Marwar and Jaipur. The Persian Akhbarat-e-Durbar-e-Mualla of April 28, 1710, stated that the Rajput Rajas were in correspondence with Banda Bahadur,[4] Banda conquered Sarhind on May 12, 1710, and established his capital at Lohgarh. Emperor Bahadur Shah led an expedition against him and invested Lohgarh in December, 1710. He ordered Rajput princes to join him in suppressing the Sikh revolt. Raja Chhatrasal Bundela and Raja Udawant Singh Bundela, Pratap Singh, brother of Maharana Amar Singh of Mewar and Raja Raj Bahadur of Kishangarh, arrived in the imperial camp. Maharaja Ajit Singh of Jodhpur and Raja Sawai Jai Singh of Jaipur promised to follow him soon, but they loitered about Narnaul, and came to the Panjab 10 months after Bahadur Shah's campaign was over. Both the Rajas reached Lohgarh on October 7, 1711. Tod says that under Emperor's order they reduced the Raja of Nahan to submission. Visiting Hardwar on the way they returned to Rajasthan in February, 1712.[5]

Mata Sundari

Guru Gobind Singh's widows, Mata Sundari and Mata Sahib Devi were living in Delhi. Mata Sundari had adopted a boy whom she named after her deceased son Ajit Singh. The boy was killed,

[1]Sainapat, *Gur Sobha* (Gurmukhi), 1965 edition, 101.

[2]Fauja Singh, *Atlas Travels of Guru Gobind Singh*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1968, p. 19.

[3]Abdur Rasul, *Tarikh-e-Muazzam Shah*, Persian MS in Ganda Singh's *Makhiz-e-Twarikh-e-Sikhan*, I, 81.

[4]V.S. Bhatnagar, *Sawai Jai Singh*, 81.

[5]Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, II, 1832 edition, 65.

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and the ladies' house was sacked. They fled to Mathura where Sawai Jai Singh of Jaipur provided them with a suitable residence and a handsome allowance for their subsistence.[1]

Alha Singh of Patiala

At the battle of Manupur near Sarhind between Emperor Muhammad Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali in March, 1748, Alha Singh of Patiala and Raja Ishwari Singh of Jaipur fought as comrades in arms against the invader.[2]

After Banda Bahadur's execution in 1716, it took the Sikhs half a century to regain political power. By 1765 they had become supreme from the Indus to the Jamuna. Raja Jawahir Singh of Bharatpur was at war with Jaipur. He hired 25,000 Sikhs under command of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. Raja Madho Singh of Jaipur invited Marathas for help. Thereupon Jawahir Singh made peace with the Raja, paid a subsidy to the Sikhs and returned to his place. This took place in December, 1765.[3]

Jawahir Singh's step-brother Nahar Singh was the chief of Dholpur. He had an extremely beautiful wife who was coveted by Jawahir Singh. He prepared to attack him and hired 7,000 Sikhs on payment of seven lakhs of rupees. Nahar Singh placed himself under protection of Marathas. In the battle fought near Dholpur on March 13-14, 1766, between the Sikhs and Marathas, the latter were badly defeated. They deserted Nahar Singh who sought shelter with Raja Madho Singh of Jaipur. Jawahir Singh's forces and the Sikhs began to plunder Jaipur territory. The Raja of Jaipur bribed the Sikhs who retired to the Panjab. Nahar Singh committed suicide on December 6, 1766. Jawahir Singh demanded Nahar Singh's widow. The lady rejected the proposal, and Madho Singh declined to expel the refugee woman from his territory. Jawahir Singh patched up peace with Madho Singh and returned to Bharatpur.[4]

EMPEROR SHAH ALAM, II, 1759-1806

Emperor Alamgir II was murdered by his prime minister Imad-

[1]Macauliffe, V, 254-57.
[2]Anandram Mukhlis, *Tazkirah*, 343-77; *Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi*, 7-20.
[3]*S.P.D.*, XXIX, 177; Sarkar, *Fall*, 1934 edition, II, 471.
[4]*S.P.D.*, XXIX, 117, 121, 126, 127, 158, 197, 204; Sarkar, II, 471.

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ud-Mulk on November 29, 1759. The deceased Emperor's 30 year old son fled away from Delhi, and crowned himself under the title of Shah Alam II on December 24, 1759, in the camp. He lived at Allahabad upto 1771. He was escorted from Allahabad to Delhi by Mahadji Sindhia in January, 1772. The Sikhs had established themselves in the Sarhind province upto Karnal and Panipat. Beyond this point lay the crownlands on both sides of river Jamuna. The revenues from this area supported the royal family and met the Emperor's personal expenses. The crownlands had become a perpetual raiding ground of the Cis-Satluj Sikhs. Najib-ud-daulah, the dictator of Delhi, had succeeded to some extent in checking the Sikh inroads. After his death on October 31, 1770, there was no check on the lawless activities of the Sikhs.

The Sikh raids and incursions

The Sikhs ravaged the royal domains upto Delhi in January, 1774, and the Mughal court could not summon up courage to oppose them. They sacked Shahdara, and took away fifty boys for ransom.[1] A German adventurer, Walter Reinhard called Samru, was given charge of crownlands to guard them against Sikhs. He took up his position at Gharaunda, 18 kms south of Karnal. The Sikhs hovered about his camp, and gave him no peace. He resigned in September, 1774.[2] In July, 1775, the Sikhs raided Paharganj and Jaisinghpura, the suburbs of Delhi. They ravaged the country upto Khurja, 82 kms south of Delhi.[3] Abul Qasim, a Mughal commander, was killed in an action near Muzaffarnagar in March, 1776, when the Sikhs were fighting as allies of Zabita Khan against Emperor Shah Alam.[4] In May, 1776, Rahimdad Khan Rohilla, the Mughal faujdar of Jind, was defeated and killed.[5] From May to September, 1777, the Sikhs fought as Zabita Khan's allies against Shah Alam who was present in the campaign.[6] From June to

[1] *Delhi Chronicle*, 273.

[2] *C.P.C.*, IV, 1026, 1097, 1152, 1184, 1195, 1298, 1362.

[3] ibid, 1721; Forrest, II, 442; *Bulandshahar District Gazetteer*, 150; *Delhi Chronicle*, 289.

[4] *Calcutta Review*, LX, 1875, p. 33.

[5] *Tarikh-e-Muzaffari*, 200a-la; Khushwaqt Rae, 169; Bakhtmal, 108-9; Bute Shah, 279b; *Raj Khalsa*, II, 27-28; *The Rajas of the Punjab*, 44-45, 315-16.

[6] *Delhi Chronicle*, 301, 302; Ghulam Ali, III, 85-88, 96-117, 130-36; Munna Lal, 183-200; Khair-ud-din, I, 295-300, 312, 342-43; Miskin, present in the campaign, 323-38.

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October, 1779, Abdul Ahad, deputy prime minister of Delhi, carried a campaign against the Cis-Satluj Sikhs, but he was badly beaten. He was saved from complete destruction by the presence of a royal prince in his camp, as the Sikhs had some regard and respect for the royal family.[1] Mirza Shafi, an imperial commander, grand nephew of prime minister Najaf Khan, led a vigorous campaign against the Cis-Satluj Sikhs from February to June, 1781. He moved from place to place in Karnal and Ambala districts subduing the Sikhs who were completely disunited, but without much success.

Sikhs granted Rākhi, 1781

On Shafi's advice Najaf Khan formally confirmed Sikh sardars in the possession of their estates north of Panipat. They were granted the right to realize *rākhi* at the rate of one-eighth of the standard land revenue due to the State, in the area from Panipat to the walls of Delhi and in the upper Ganga Doāb from Saharanpur to Khurja. In return the Sikhs agreed not to raid the Imperial territory and to serve the Delhi Government for pay when called upon to do so. Najaf Khan only repeated what the Sayyid Brothers had done 62 years earlier in respect of the Maratha claim to Chauth and Sardeshmukhi in the Mughal Deccan. There was one great difference between the grant to Marathas and the Sikhs. The Maratha claims of Chauth and Sardeshmukhi amounted to nearly half of the gross produce. The Sikhs demanded nothing more than 4 or 5 per cent of the total produce or income. But whereas the Marathas abided by the terms of agreement, the Sikhs did not. They enjoyed their freedom of action more than the bond of a formal agreement or contract.[2]

Sikh penetration into the Red Fort, Delhi, 1783

In March, 1783, the Sikhs attacked Malka Ganj and Sabzi Mandi at Delhi. Many people were killed in Mughalpura mohalla. Then they broke through the Ajmeri Gate and sacked Hauz Qazi area. The Emperor invited Begam Samru by an express message from Sardhana in Meerut district to save the capital. Meanwhile the Sikhs entered the Red Fort and in intense excitement unceremoniously

[1] *Delhi Chronicle*, 322; Khair-ud-din, II, 5; Munna Lal, 219-20; Miskin, present in the campaign, 342; Francklin, *Shah Aulam*, 89.
[2] *British Museum Persian Akhbarat*, Or, 25020, I.

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placed Jassa Singh Ahluwalia on the throne loudly acclaiming him Badshah Singh. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia challenged him. The Ahluwalia chief immediately declined the high honour. This took place on March 11, 1783.[1]

Begam Samru arrived in the capital on March 12, 1783. She immediately settled terms with Baghel Singh. He was allowed to build seven Sikh Gurdwaras within nine months, control the Kotwali, draw three-eighths of the octroi duties for his expenses, appoint two Sikh agents to reside permanently in Sabzi Mandi, and prevent the Sikhs from disturbing the capital and the crownlands on receipt of one-eighth of revenues as rākhi.[2]

Warren Hastings' minute, 1784

In a minute presented to his Council by Warren Hastings, the Governor-General on December 4, 1784, stated:

"While I was at Lucknow, they carried their depredations to the very suburbs of Delhi, where two of their officers actually reside in a quarter called Subzee Mundee, which is chiefly occupied by shroffs and shopkeepers, for the double purpose of levying their Rauky (which is the name given to that species of contribution) and of protecting the inhabitants from the marauders of their own nation."[3]

Sikhs support Ghulam Qadir, 1787

Zabita Khan's son Ghulam Qadir was a rogue. He won over the Sikhs and attacked Delhi. The Emperor appealed for help to Mahadji, the English, Nawab of Oudh, Begam Samru, and in particular to Baghel Singh whom he had allowed to build gurdwaras at Delhi, and had granted rākhi of the capital. On August 31, 1787, he called Rormal, vakil of Baghel Singh, living in Delhi and said:

"Write to Baghel Singh to seize all the territories of Ghulam Qadir, as we have appointed him our agent of that country." A royal re-script to that effect was given to Rormal on 2nd September.

[1]*Delhi Chronicle*, 350-51; Khair-ud-din, II, 66; Ratan Singh Bhangu, 539-55; Gian Singh, *Panth Prakash*, 912-13; *Raj Khalsa*, 616; Kartar Singh Kalaswalia, *Tegh Khalsa*, 237-38.

[2]Ratan Singh Bhangu, 554-60; Kartar Singh Kalaswalia, 240-45, *Raj Khalsa*, 575-77; Forrest, *Selections*, III, 1124; Maheshwar, I, 107; *Dilliyethil*, I, 84.

[3]Forrest, *Selections*, III, 1123-35; *N.A.I.*, Secret Proceedings, 14 December, 1784, pp. 537-44.

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Gurdit Singh of Ladwa and Ghulam Qadir entered Delhi on 5th September. The Emperor appointed Ghulam Qadir Mir Bakhshi and Regent and conferred the title of Amir-ul-Umara upon him. On 8th September the ungrateful Baghel Singh also joined Ghulam Qadir. The other Sikhs too went to his side. Only Bhanga Singh of Thanesar and Begam Samru stood by the Emperor, but they were helpless against the Rohillas and the Sikhs. On October 15, 1787, the Emperor conferred upon Bhanga Singh a robe of honour, a jigha with a jewel, a sarpech, a sword and an elephant.

Sikhs attack the Emperor at Rewari, 1788

The crownlands in the neighbourhood of Rewari were usurped by Najaf Quli. Being hard pressed for money Emperor Shah Alam issued out of the capital to realize revenues from Najaf Quli. This man immediately hired a body of Sikhs. In the night of March 12, 1788, he led the Sikhs to assault the Emperor's camp. The Sikhs slaughtered Imperial troops indiscriminately, and reached the Emperor's tent. Himmat Bahadur Gosain opposed them and drove them back. The Emperor took shelter in Begam Samru's camp.[1] It is most remarkable to note that during Emperor Shah Alam II's trials and tribulations only this lady's arm came to his help steadfastly and without any selfish end.

NAWAB OF OUDH

Negotiations with the Sikhs

The territory of Oudh lay to the north-east of river Ganga and extended from Rohilkhand to Bihar. Its revenues amounted to two crores. The Nawabs owed allegiance to the Mughal Emperor without paying any tribute. After the battle of Buxar in 1764, the Nawab of Oudh became an ally of the British Government. In 1774 the Nawab conquered Rohilkhand with British help. In 1776 the Nawab formed a plan to annex the districts of Saharanpur and Muzaffarnagar then under Zabita Khan. Kanwar Sain, a vakil of the Nawab, visited the Sikh leaders who lay encamped in the Doāb near Ganga river. He brought letters from Nawab Mukhtar-ud-daulah and Maharaja Surat Singh, the two highest dignitaries at the court of Lucknow. Quite attractive terms were offered to the Sikhs

[1]Khair-ud-din, 122-27: Ghulam Ali, III, 253-55; Munna Lal, 318-25; *Dilliyethil*, I, 262, 272, 274, 279; Sarkar, *Fall*, III, 426-29.

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for expelling Zabita Khan and place his territories in the control of the Nawab. The proposal was rejected. Surat Singh again opened negotiations offering the Sikhs a sum of seven lakhs immediately, another seven lakhs on the expulsion of Zabita Khan, and one half of the revenues of the territory to be paid to the Sikhs annually in perpetuity. The negotiations failed.

In the Ganga Doāb

The Sikhs had been invading frequently, almost twice a year, the Ganga Doāb, and on many occasions penetrated into Rohilkhand across river Ganga. George Forster who travelled into this part of the country in the beginning of 1783 observed:

"The Sicques have reduced the largest portion of the territory of Zabitah Khan, leaving him little more than the fort of Ghous Ghur, with a very limited domain in its vicinity."[1]

George Forster while passing through Rohilkhand noticed the terror-stricken people on the approach of a party of the Sikhs, who were still on the other side of the Ganga. He wrote:

"Being at that time in Rohilcund, I witnessed the terror and general alarm which prevailed amongst the inhabitants, who, deserting the open country, had retired into forts and places inaccessible to cavalry."[2]

Sack of Chandausi, January, 1785

George Forster writes: "The Sicque forces assembled again in the beginning of the year 1785, when they entered the province of Rohilcund and having laid it waste, for the space of one hundred miles, they returned unmolested."[3] The most notable event of this campaign was sack of Chandausi. A horde of 30,000 Sikhs under Baghel Singh, Gurdit Singh and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, swept over the upper Ganga Doāb early in January, 1785. They crossed the Ganga into the territory of the Nawab of Oudh. On January, 13, the villages of Barsi and Mahmudpur were razed to the ground. Then it was planned to attack Moradabad. It was Friday, and all the Muslims, of the city and its neighbourhood were to gather there in a mosque for prayers. The idea of attacking Moradabad was given up.

[1]George Forster, *Journey from Bengal to England*, I, 325.
[2]ibid, 326.
[3]ibid, 326, fn.

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It was reported that the richest city in the area was Chandausi, 44 kms distant from Moradabad. Its chief, Banne Khan, had fled away for fear of the Sikhs. They were told that Chandausi was a great mart where 2,000 bankers, jewellers and merchants conducted business worth crores of rupees. They were all Banias, and there would be no opposition. The Sikhs reached there at 9 o'clock in the morning on January 14, 1785. They closed the city gates and posted guards there. All the 30,000 men fell upon every house and looted on whatever they could lay their hands. They dug floors and ceilings, and spent full two days in this nefarious work. Every Sikh horseman loaded his goods on three or more horses and camels. Afterwards the town was set on fire. They retired to Bhawanipur in the night of 15-16 January, and crossed the Ganga on the morning of 17 January. During the night of 17-18 January, a banker of Sambhal, taken captive by the Sikhs for ransom, escaped as moon had set at 10 P.M. with the assistance of some thieves who had entered the Sikh camp.

After the lion came the jackal Anotner predatory tribe was that of the Gujars. They had imitated the Sikhs in keeping long hair on head and growing beards and moustaches, and adding Singh to their names. On January 15, 1785, Gulab Singh Gujar at the head of 500 horse crossed the Ganga at the ghat of Qamr-ud-din Nagar, and ravaged the towns of Bachhraon, Salimpur and Garhi Sher Muhammad Khan.[1]

Anupshahar

Mahadji Sindhia made a treaty with the Sikhs on May 9, 1785. By it the Sikhs agreed not to raid the territory of the Nawab of Oudh. James Anderson, the British Resident at the court of Sindhia, wrote on May 16, 1785, that the treaty had "effectually secured the Vizier's Dominions against any future inroads from the Seiks."

The Raja of Anupshahar was a subordinate of the Nawab of Oudh. In order to save his country from the rapacity of the Sikhs, he paid them rākhi at the rate of Rs. 2,000 annually The British

[1]Charles Hamilton, *An Historical Relation of the Origin, Progress and final dissolution of the Government of the Rohilla Afgans in the Northern Provinces of Hindustan*, I, London, 1787, 428, 440; *N.A.I.*, Secret Proceedings, 19 February, 1st March, 26 April, 1785; Foreign Department, 41 A, no. 45; Secret Letters to Court, 1786, V, 336 43; Bengal and Madras Papers, III, 1757-95, p. 18; *C.P.C.*, VII, 8, 14, 19, 20, 41-44, 68, 149, 176; Khair-ud-din, II, 73, 103.

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Government had established a cantonment there. Colonel Harper was the commanding officer there in 1786, when the Raja paid rākhi to the Sikhs. The Colonel reported the matter to Lord Cornwallis against the Raja's policy of appeasement. He asked Harper to convey the Governor-General's disapprobation of the Raja's "contemptible conduct" "in the strongest terms" to the Nawab of Oudh. The troops at Anupshahar were reinforced by three more regiments. The Governor-General issued instructions that if the Sikhs invaded Oudh territory, they should be repelled, but no provocation should be given to them in any manner whatsoever.[1]

The Nawab's views regarding Robert Bruce in Sikh captivity

On January 3, 1791, Bhanga Singh of Thanesar captured Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Bruce at Anupshahar, and kept him in the fort of Thanesar for nearly ten months. The Nawab of Oudh suggested to the British authorities to despatch a strong force against him. He stressed that forbearance would encourage the Sikhs to raid his country more frequently. Edward Otto Ives, the British Resident at Lucknow, replied that the British pursuit would result into a "settled enmity and systematic desire to distress his Excellency's country." Then the Nawab volunteered his assistance to Mahadji Sindhia in crushing the Sikhs. He offered to place a number of regiments at his disposal. Sindhia believed in reconciliation. It was then suggested that in Oudh there were many Sikh merchants who should be coerced. Edward Otto Ives replied that the Sikhs in Panjab would not care "what becomes of the merchants."[2]

Rampur

After the Rohilla war in 1774, Faizullah, a son of Ali Muhammad had been given Rampur State worth 14 lakhs a year. On his death in August, 1794, his eldest son Muhammad Ali succeeded him. As he possessed a cruel temperament, the people favoured his younger brother Ghulam Muhammad. He got his elder brother murdered and himself assumed power, and offered a large sum to the Nawab of Oudh for confirmation. The Nawab was willing to

[1] *N.A.I.*, Secret Proceedings, June 7, 1785, pp. 1683-91; January 8, 1787, p. 69; January 31, 1787, pp. 712-14; *Intikhab-e-Akhbarat-e-Durbar-e-Mu'alla wa Mahadji Sindhia Bahadur*, Salar Jang MS, no. 4329, from 6 July to 8 October, 1787.

[2] *N.A.I.*, Political Proceedings, 17 January, 1791, no. 4; *Poona Residency Correspondence*, I, 269, 273; *Dilliyethil*, II, 5, 32, 35, 63, 64.

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agree, but the British authorities wanted to punish him. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia offered to Ghulam Muhammad the service of 30,000 Sikhs. To counteract this move the Nawab of Oudh tried to hire another body of the Sikhs under Rae Singh of Jagadhri, Sher Singh of Buriya, Karam Singh of Shahabad and others. They accepted the Nawab's offer. Rae Singh and Sher Singh in a letter signed jointly said: "Your Excellency knows that pay a soldier and he will give his life."

Bhanga Singh of Thanesar wrote: "Your Excellency knows the nature of the Sikhs without our describing it: that unless paid they never exert themselves for anyone."

The Nawab of Oudh could not settle terms without the approval of the English, while Ghulam Muhammad neither possessed sufficient money to pay the Sikhs nor was he prepared to defy the British Government. Ghulam Muhammad was banished from the state, and Ahmad Ali Khan, son of the murdered prince was installed in office.[1]

Nanakmata

Nanakmata, a place associated with Guru Nanak's visit, was situated in Oudh. In June, 1795, the Sikhs sought permission of the Nawab of Oudh to visit it. C.F. Cherry, the British Resident at Lucknow, advised the Nawab to suggest to the Sikhs to postpone the visit to next year.[2]

THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT

Clive's duplicity

The battle of Plassey on June 23, 1757, between Siraj-ud-daulah, the Nawab of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, and Clive laid the foundation of the British rule in India. The battle of Buxar in October, 1764, placed Oudh under British protection. The British Governor of Bengal, Clive, felt alarmed at Ahmad Shah Abdali's invasions. He flattered the invader for suppressing the Sikh revolt, and at the same time praised the Sikhs for checking the Shah from reaching Delhi. In a letter addressed to Nawab Shuja-ud-daulah on February

[1]*N.A.I.*, Foreign Department, Political Proceedings, 22 May, 1795, nos. 88, 92; Francklin, *Shah Aulam*, 216-41; *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, XXI, 183-84; *Dilliyethil*, II, 137, 138.

[2]*N.A.I.*, Persian Letters Received, no. 263, June, 1796.

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19, 1767, he expressed satisfaction and delight that the Abdali had suffered defeat from the Sikhs. In another letter written to Shah Vali Khan, prime minister of the Abdali, he offered congratulations on the Shah's victory over the Sikhs, and thus freeing humanity from their tyranny.[1]

Jhanda Singh Bhangi, a very powerful Sikh sardar, tried to cultivate friendly relations with the British Government. On August, 19, 1771, he wrote a letter to General Barker at Lucknow. He told him that the Sikhs had not allowed Ahmad Shah Durrani to cross the river Indus.[2]

Warren Hasting's anxiety

The Sikhs raided upper Ganga Doāb and Rohilkhand bordering on Oudh as well as the Delhi region frequently from 1764 onward. The next Governor-General, Warren Hastings, was deeply perturbed at Sikh domination. He had formed a plan to establish British supremacy over Agra and Delhi. The appearance of warlike Sikhs threatened his plans. He wanted to know all about them. He asked his personal friend Major Antoine-Louis Henri Polier, a Swiss Engineer, in the military service of the English East India Company, then employed by Emperor Shah Alam II, to furnish him an account of the Sikhs. He submitted an excellent paper to him in 1776.

The Sikh ravages in Rohilkhand

In 1774 Rohilkhand was conquered by Shuja-ud-daulah Nawab of Oudh, with British help, and so this province also passed under British protection. The Sikhs had been invading it for some time past. The British Government established a number of cantonments along river Ganga to protect Oudh and Rohilkhand from the attacks of Marathas and the Sikhs. One of such cantonments was at Daranagar, 10 kms south of Bijnor. On December 5, 1778, a party of 300 Sikhs appeared at Jai Ghat above Daranagar. A Jamadar posted there by the British lost six men in killed and wounded in opposing the Sikhs. They plundered several villages in the district of Najibabad.

On 6 December, 1778, another Sikh party attacked Nagal Ghat,

[1]*C.P.C.*, II, 52, 145, 327.
[2]ibid, 868.

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12 kms north-west of Najibabad. They were repulsed by Lieutenant Knowels. Another Sikh band came to Byee Ghât. At this place they were opposed by Lieutenant Namara. The Sikhs succeeded in crossing over. Lieutenant-Colonel Muir, Officer Commanding at Daranagar, detached a battalion under Captain Landeg with a gun in their pursuit. Muir called to his assistance eight companies from the 22nd Battalion. Nawab Faizullah Khan of Rampur placed a contingent of 700 horse at the disposal of Muir. Eventually the Sikhs were forced to retire.[1]

On October 11, 1780, a Sikh force of about 4,000 horse crossed the Ganga, and drove away cattle from the districts of Bijnor and Najibabad. In January, 1783, a Sikh force under Baghel Singh appeared on the banks of the Ganga at Anupshahar. They were opposed by the forces of the Nawab of Oudh and some British battalions under Colonel Knudson and were held back.[2]

George Forster

Warren Hastings was deeply perturbed over these activities of the Sikhs. He wanted to know more about their history. He selected George Forster, a civilian, to travel right across Bengal, Bihar, U.P., Panjab, Jammu and Kashmir, on his way to England by the land route, and to collect authentic information about the Sikhs. Forster sat in the sun for months in order to change the colour of his skin from white to brown. He learnt Persian and Arabic. He disguised himself as a Turkish traveller pretending to go home in Turkey. He left Calcutta on May 2?, 1782. He could not dare enter the plains of the Panjab for fear of the Sikhs. He passed through the Shiwalik hills from Nahan to Jammu from March 6, 1783 to April 14, 1783. He wrote a fine account of his numerous contacts with the Sikhs as well as a first-rate chapter on the history of the Sikhs.

Major James Browne

About the same time Warren Hastings chose another British officer to meet the Sikhs at the Mughal capitals of Agra and Delhi,

[1]*N.A.I.*, Secret Proceedings, 28 December, 1778, pp. 2541-44, 2555 58; Secret Letters to Court, III, Ist February, 1779, p. 59; *C.P.C.*, V, 1371.

[2]Colonel Sir John Cummings, commanding the English brigade at Anupshahar, conveyed this news to Warren Hastings on January 27, 1783. A copy of it was sent to John Bristow, Resident at Lucknow.

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and write their history and organise opposition to them. It was Major James Browne who was appointed British Agent and Minister at the Court of Delhi on August 20, 1782. Browne stayed at Agra from February to November, 1783. According to William Francklin and G.R.C. Williams, James Browne was given clear instructions to organise a confederacy against the Sikhs consisting of Emperor Shah Alam II, the Marathas, Rohillas and the Nawab of Oudh.

Browne met at Agra Mirza Shafi, Regent of the Empire, on February 26, 1783. He also got into touch with Baghel Singh's vakil, Lakhpat Rae. He interviewed several Sikhs who were roaming about everywhere in northern India. Browne collected information from them and compiled his account under the title *History of the Origin and Progress of the Sicks*. Warren Hastings also employed Sayyid Ghulam Husain, a resident of Bareilly, to write a history of India with special reference to the Sikhs. He compiled this work in 1784 under the title of *Siyar-ul-Mutakhirin*.

Browne's negotiations with the Sikhs

Browne came to Delhi on December 11, 1783. In reply to Browne's communications several Sikh sardars sent letters to him containing declarations of mutual goodwill and cooperation. Browne mildly protested against their behaviour for committing plunder and violence in the Doāb and Rohilkhand. In his diary he recorded his appreciation of the manly boldness in their manners and conversation which was quite contrary to that exhibited by other people of India.[1] In January, 1784, a body of 30,000 Sikhs under Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and Karam Singh crossed the Jamuna into Saharanpur district. The British commanding officer at Bareilly was alarmed, and the British troops at Bareilly and Fatahgarh were reinforced. Browne wrote to Warren Hastings about it on February 5, 1784, and on 13 February rebuked Kalyan Singh, son of Karam Singh, one of the leaders of the Sikh expedition. Kalyan Singh assured him that the Sikhs would not enter Rohilkhand.[2] Browne attempted to organise a confederacy against the Sikhs, but failed.[3]

[1] *India Tracts*, II, x.

[2] N.A.I., Foreign Department, Letters to and from Major Browne and Warren Hastings, 41 A, no. 45; Secret Proceedings, 11 May, 1784, pp. 1096-1100.

[3] *James Browne's dispatches*, 1782 to 1785, N.A.I., Foreign Department, 41A, nos. 19-20, 22-29; *C.P.C.*, VII, 315 (13-14, 17-27, 47).

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Warren Hastings plans against the Sikhs

Warren Hastings presented a minute to his Council regarding the Sikhs on December 14, 1784. He stated no power could threaten the British designs on Delhi except the Sikhs. This "mean sect" has established its dominion from Attock to Delhi. Their "present state is too contemptible to be an object of apprehension." They were excellent military men, but their "spirit of independence" would not make them a power. To check their power he had instigated Prince Jahandar Shah, a rebel son of Emperor Shah Alam, to organise opposition to the Sikhs at court. The battalions provided to the Nawab of Oudh for his escort would be placed at the disposal of the Prince if he could pay for them. The British detachment stationed at Fatahgarh would be spared for the Prince. As Emperor Shah Alam was disposed towards the Sikhs, the Prince would stage a revolt. In case of success the Prince would be placed on the throne under the British protection. This plan would save the Company's exchequer a sum of Rs. 32,36,826 annually which was spent on British troops stationed at various ghats on the Ganga.

The plan of Warren Hastings failed for the following reasons:

1. The Prince had neither the ability nor the capacity to execute such a grand design.
2. Warren Hastings could not spare his troops as in their absence to farther north the Sikhs would cut into their rear to attack Rohilkhand and Oudh.
3. The Ganga Doāb and trans-Jamuna territory was under Mahadji Sindhia who would not allow a free passage to the British troops to reach Delhi.
4. Emperor Shah Alam had the support of the Marathas and the Sikhs to suppress his rebel son.

The Sikhs offer to form an alliance with the British

Ambaji Ingle, one of the ablest generals of Mahadji Sindhia, made a provisional treaty of peace and friendship with the Sikhs on March 30, 1785.[1] On April 11, a Sikh vakil met Colonel Sir John Cumming, Officer Commanding at Farrukhabad, offering to form an alliance with the English against the Marathas.[2] Some other Sikhs

[1] *Dilliyethil*, I, 134, 157; Maheshwar, II, 90; Parasnis (New), 373; *C.P.C.*, VII, 212.

[2] N.A.I., Secret Proceedings, 26 April, 1785.

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waited upon Major William Palmer, the British Resident at Lucknow, o April 17, for the same purpose.[1] The British authorities did not like to offend Mahadji Sindhia. Mahadji ratified Ingle's provisional treaty with the Sikhs on May 9, 1785. On that very day in the evening a Sikh vakil offered to James Aderson, British Resident at Sindhia's court, a proposal for an alliance against Mahadji.

John Macpherson

John Macpherson, the Acting Governor-General tried to protect dominions of the Nawab of Oudh from the incursions of the Sikhs. On July 19, 1786, he deputed George Forster who had already travelled through the Sikh territories to negotiate with them. Forster's negotiations were cut short in August, 1787, by Lord Cornwallis, the new Governor-General.

Lord Cornwallis

Lord Cornwallis advocated policy of persuasion in dealing with the Sikhs. He instructed British Resident at Lucknow to please the Sikh vakil posted there.[2]

In December, 1790, a Sikh band of 300 men attacked Longcroft, an Englishman, who manufactured about 2,000 quintals of indigo annually at village Jalauli in Aligarh district. The villagers opposed them. Longcroft watched fighting through the window of his castle. A villager speared their chief in the back, and the Sikhs retired.[3]

Then Bhanga Singh of Thanesar assumed the leadership of this party. At Anupshahar on the Ganga he realized a sum of Rs. 2,000 from the local raja as rākhi. There was a British cantonment under command of Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Stuart. On January 3, 1791, he was galloping his horse all alone for a morning excercise. Bhanga Singh captured him and brought him to Thanesar. He demanded two lakhs of rupees as ransom. Many Englishmen offered to collect this amount. Cornwallis did not agree. His diplomatic efforts failed to secure the Colonel's release. Ultimately a sum of Rs. 60,000 was paid through Begam Samru and the Colonel was

[1]Ibid. 19 April, 1785, pp. 1212-62.

[2]N.A.I., Secret Letters to Court, 1786-92, VII, 187-88; Secret Proceedings, 8 January, 1787, p. 69; 31 January, pp. 712-14, 718-23; 9 April, pp. 2155-78, 25 April, pp. 2443-45; *Poona Residency Correspondence*, I. 95-102.

[3]Twining, *Travels in India—A hundred years ago*, 1893, pp. 289-90.

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set free on October 24, 1791.[1]

Lord Wellesley

Lord Wellesley was a great imperialist. He had an eye on the Panjab. In 1799 he asked George Thomas, an Irish adventurer, who had set himself up as the Raja of Hansi in Haryana, to supply him an account of the Panjab. He replied that he would conquer the Panjab for the British if he were supported by him. In the last decade of the eighteenth century Shah Zaman of Kabul invaded India. Wellesley was alarmed. He did not wish the establishment of a strong Islamic state in northern India. He felt sure that the Sikhs though completely disunited were still capable of checking the invader's progress. This actually happened. The Shah could not proceed beyond Amritsar owing to Sikh attacks. Shah Zaman sent his agent Neki Singh with presents to Ranjit Singh asking for a free passage to Delhi. Ranjit Singh's occupation of Lahore on July 7, 1799, and the receipt of a khilat by him from Shah Zaman in December, 1799, caused deep concern to the Governor-General. To create a rift between Ranjit Singh and Shah Zaman, the British Government deputed Yusaf Ali to Lahore in 1800. Delhi was conquered by the British on September 11, 1803, and the Sikh raids into the Doāb and north of Delhi came to an end.

THE HILL STATES

The Sikh relations with the hill states lying between the Ganga and the Chenab began at different times. By the beginning of the last quarter of the eighteenth century the Sikh domination over this region was firmly established. The Sikhs confined their activities to the Shiwalik hills, and did not penetrate farther into the high mountainous regions. Beginning from the Ganga we will traverse across the Jamuna, the Satluj, the Beas, the Ravi upto the Chenab.

Srinagar (Garhwal)

The Garhwal State with its capital at Srinagar lies between the Ganga and the Jamuna covering the hilly area extending from Rishikesh and Dehra Dun upward in the northerly direction. The

[1]*Dilliyethil*, II, Additional, 20; *Poona Residency Correspondence*, I, 375; *N.A.I.*, Miscellaneous, no. 46.

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earliest contact of the Sikhs began in Aurangzeb's time. Ram Rae, the eldest son of the seventh Guru Hari Rae had been excluded from succession for misinterpreting the holy Granth. He lived at the court of Aurangzeb who granted him a piece of land at Dehra Dun. He established his own institution of Guruship there. When Guru Gobind Singh was living at Paonta, he went to Dehra Dun to help Ram Rae in his dispute with his masands. In October, 1688, Guru Gobind Singh was attacked by the hill rajas under the leadership of Fatah Shah of Garhwal. The battle was fought at Bhangani, 13 kms north of Paonta which resulted in victory for the Guru.

The Sikhs conquered the Sarhind province in January, 1764, and in February they invaded the upper Ganga Doāb. Afterwards their raids became so regular and the spirit of resistance by the people and the government authorities gave way to such an extent that they quietly paid to the Sikhs rākhi or protection duty which amounted to 4 or 5 per cent of the gross income or produce or one-eighth of the amount of revenues fixed by the government. Dehra Dun was capital of the lower division of Garhwal State. A deputy of the Raja resided there. He regularly and punctually paid to the Sikhs whatever amount was due to them. At Kheynaspur, about 30 kms north, another officer of the Raja paid rākhi to the Sikhs. George Forster was a special envoy of the British Governor-General Warren Hastings. He was travelling in the disguise of a Muslim trader to collect information about the Sikhs and others. He was at Kheynaspur on February 28, 1783. He wrote:

"At this place, I saw two Sicque horsemen, who had been sent from their country to receive the Siringnaghur tribute, which is collected from the revenues of certain custom-houses. From the manner in which these men were treated, or rather treated themselves, I frequently wished for the power of migrating into the body of a Sicque for a few weeks, so well did these cavaliers fare. No sooner had they alighted, than beds were prepared for their repose, and their horses were supplied with green barley pulled out of the field. The Kafilah travellers were contented to lodge on the ground, and expressed their thanks for permission to purchase what they required: such is the difference between those who were in, and those who were out of power."[1] Rae Singh of Buriya realized

[1]George Forster, *Journey from Bengal to England*, 1970 edition, I, 229; *Dehra Dun District Gazetteer*, 174.

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tribute up to 1803 when Ganga Doāb, Delhi, and western Haryana passed under the control of the British Government.

Sirmur or Nahan

The rulers of Sirmur State, capital Nahan, maintained cordial relations with the Sikhs. The seventh Guru Hari Rae stayed at Nahan for twelve[1] years from 1645 to 1656 when this State was under Raja Karam Prakash. Raja Medni Prakash, 1684-1704, offered residence to Guru Gobind Singh in his State, and came to receive him in 1685 at Tokah at the foot of the hills, 25 kms below Nahan. The Guru lived at Paonta from 1685 to 1688. In the battle of Bhangani when all the hill chiefs had united against the Guru, he remained neutral. Banda Bahadur, a resident of Nahan State, escaped from Lohgarh through this State. Its Raja, Bhup Prakash, was arrested by Emperor Bahadur Shah, and removed to the Red Fort, Delhi, in an iron cage as a prisoner for not capturing Banda Bahadur.[2] After the Sikh conquest of Sarhind province in January, 1764, the Raja of Nahan paid an annual tribute of Rs 2,000 upto 1809 when the State passed under British protection.[3] Sirmur was tributary to Bhanga Singh of Thanesar.

Hindur or Nalagarh

The sixth Guru Hargobind and Prince Dharam Chand of Hindur remained prisoners of the Mughal Government in the fort of Gwalior. On their release the Prince obtained his throne with the help of the Guru. In the battle of Bhangni Raja Hari Chand of Hindur fought against Guru Gobind Singh and was killed. Afterwards his successor was present along with other hill rajas in the battle of Anandpur in 1699 soon after the foundation of the Khalsa.[4] This State became tributary to Hari Singh of Sialba in the third quarter of the eighteenth century.

Kahlur or Bilaspur

The sixth Guru Hargobind founded Kiratpur situated in Kahlur State where he spent his last years. Kiratpur served as the seat of the seventh and eighth Gurus. The ninth Guru Tegh Bahadur

[1]Mohsin Fani, *Dabistan-e-Mazahib* (Persian), 238.
[2]*Sirmur State Gazetteer*, 1904, Part A, p. 14, fn. 2.
[3]George Forster, I, 231-32.
[4]*Gazetteer of Simla Hill States*, Lahore, 1908, VIII, Part A, 4-5.

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purchased another tract of land near Kiratpur which became famous as Anandpur. It remained the headquarters of the ninth and tenth Gurus. Its ruler Raja Bhim Chand was hostile to Guru Gobind Singh. He was mainly responsible for the battle of Bhangani against the Guru. Guru Gobind Singh created the Khalsa there in 1699, and fought many battles against the hill rajas and the Mughals upto 1704. George Forster came across many Sikh horsemen roaming about in the neighbourhood of Bilaspur in March, 1783 behaving like lords. He writes:

"Halted on the 21st and 22nd at Bellaspour. These wars (Bilaspur was at war with Kangra) did not a little derange our measure of progress, especially as there was attached to the Kangrah army, through which we must necessarily pass, a body of Sicques, who had impressed with a lively terror, even this sequestered region "[1] Obviously Bilaspur could not escape from paying tribute to the neighbourly powerful Sikh Chief, Hari Singh of Sialba.

Kangra Hill States

Guru Nanak passed through Kangra hills during his travels into the Himalayas. The sixth Guru Hargobind employed Udasis, a non-family sect founded by Guru Nanak's eldest son Srichand, in propagating Sikhism in the hilly regions. As a consequence the Muslims living in those areas became Sikhs. The contemporary author of the *Dabistan*, Mohsin Fani, says that in those hills upto the borders of Tibet and Khotan the name of Musalman had disappeared.[2]

Guru Gobind Singh was developing Anandpur into a great Sikh centre. The Raja of Kahlur, in whose territory Anandpur was situated did not like it. He attacked the Guru along with the rajas of Kangra and Guler.[3] In the battle of Bhangani, 1688, several rajas of Kangra hills fought against Guru Gobind Singh. At Nadaun Guru Gobind Singh supported the rajas of Kangra hills against the Mughals in 1690. In 1701 Guru Gobind Singh visited Riwalsar and Mandi where he was warmly received by the rajas of the neighbourhood. Afterwards the hill rajas participated in attacking Anandpur.

[1]George Forster, I, 241-42.
[2]Mohsin Fani, *Dabistan-e-Mazahib* (Persian), 235.
[3]Giani Kartar Singh Kalaswalia ,*Sri Guru Dashmesh Prakash*, 503.

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In the third quarter of the eighteenth century the Sikhs established their supremacy in the Kangra hills. George Forster during his journey through the Kangra hills found a body of about 200 Sikhs fighting on the side of the Raja of Kangra against the Rani of Bilaspur. He observed that the whole hill region lying between the Ganga and the Chenab was overrun by the Sikhs, and all the chiefs had been made tributary. At Siba on April 3, 1783, Forster saw only two Sikhs who had come to realize tribute. Due to some delay in payment they struck a terror into the hearts of the raja and his people. Forster saw a small fort at Talwara built by Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, from where he controlled the whole of Kangra region.[1]

Jammu

The Jammu State lying between the Banihal mountains on the west and river Ravi in the east was confined mostly to the hilly region. There were twenty-two States, of which eight were situated to the west of river Chenab, all Muslim converted from Hinduism and fourteen to the east of this river, all Hindu. The Raja of Jammu was the head of all these States. The Mughal Emperors appointed a governor at Jammu to keep the rajas under control and to realize tribute. About the middle of the eighteenth century the Jammu Raja began to assert his independence. He owed allegiance to Delhi only in name without paying any tribute. Later on he became a tributary first to Ahmad Shah Abdali and then to the Sikhs.

The first contact between the Sikhs and Jammu took place when in 1713 Banda Bahadur established a camp on the bank of river Chenab, 75 kms. from Jammu. The place came to be called Derah Baba Banda. Jammu was under Ranjit Dev from 1730 to 1781. He extended his sway into the plains of the Panjab to the north of a line drawn from Dinga in the Chaj Doāb to Kalowal on the Chenab, and from Roras to Sankatra and Munda Khail on the Ravi. This area mainly covered the districts of Gujrat and Sialkot.[2]

Ranjit Dev could not escape from the rising tide of Sikh power in the Panjab. About 1770 he became tributary to Jhanda Singh Bhangi. According to George Forster he paid only a few thousand rupees. Gian Singh says he paid one lakh of rupees. *Sialkot District*

[1]George Forster, *Journey*, I, 242, 257, 258, 260-62, 264; Hutchison and Vogel, *History of the Panjab Hill States*, 1933, I, 81.

[2]*Khaznna-e-Amira* (Persian), 100; *Shamshir Khalsa* (Urdu), 93; *Sialko tDistrict Gazetteer*, 16, 17.

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Gazetteer puts this amount at one lakh and a quarter. Khushwaqt Rae states he paid two and a half lakhs.[1]

On his death in 1781 Ranjit Dev was succeeded by his son Brij Raj Dev. During his reign Jammu State passed completely under Sikh subjugation. It became tributary first to Haqiqat Singh Kanhiya and then to Mahan Singh. In his time Jammu was sacked twice by Mahan Singh Sukarchakia. He ransacked state treasury and palaces as ruthlessly as he fleeced the bankers and merchants of the city. Jammu was the richest city in northern India richer than Lahore and Delhi. On its ruins the fortunes of Ranjit Singh's monarchy were built. Just see the irony of fate. About fifty years later, the fortunes of Jammu were rebuilt on the ruins of Lahore.

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[1]George Forster, I, 286-87; *Raj Khalsa* (Urdu), III, 4; *Sialkot District Gazetteer*, 18; Khushwaqt Rae (Persian MS.), 155.

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CHAPTER 20

Role of the Sikhs in Delhi as Compared with Others

Delhi, the capital of India, suffered terribly from 1737 to 1788. This eternal city on the Jamuna fell a victim to nine Gardis or periods of hurly-burly. It was sacked twice by Nadir Shah, five times by Ahmad Shah Durrani, six times by Rohilla Afghans, nine times by Turki soldiers in the service of Mughal Government, once by Bahadur Khan Baluch, the founder of Bahadurgarh, 30 kms west, twice by Gujars, three times by Jats, ten times by Marathas and fourteen times by the Sikhs. 52 times in 51 years. During this period the most striking events were the following :

The royal family: Two Emperors were assassinated and one was beaten and blinded. A queen, widow of one king and mother of the other, was blinded and murdered. Some queens were starved for days together. They welcomed an earthen mug of bad broth from a charity kitchen. Hungry princes and princesses tried to run away to beg food in the streets. Two queens travelled in dirty clothes of a water-carrier's wives on bullocks. Three hundred and fifty queens and princesses together with thousands of other women of lesser ranks were stripped of their clothing and raped on the sand in the open by Maratha soldiery.

Prime ministers: A prime minister of 15 years' standing was made to stand in the sun and forced to pay one crore of rupees. Another prime minister was strangled to death, and his corpse tied to a heavy stone was thrown into the river Jamuna. The other half-dressed prime minister was dragged out of his mansion barefoot through bazars and streets to a distance of 3.5 kms. abused, insulted and occasionally beaten all the way. One hundred beautiful women from the harem of an ex-prime minister were seized by Ahmad Shah Abdali. All the wives, sisters and mothers of a prime

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minister, were violated by Rohillas.

The nobles: All the prettiest wives and maiden daughters of a Mir Bakhshi or Defence Minister as well as Commander-in-Chief were dragged to bed (*madkhulah kard*) by Nadir Shah. The nobles had been fleeced of their wealth to such an extent that according to famous Urdu poet Sauda who was then living in Delhi, their daughters, clad in a veil and with a rosy-cheeked baby in their arms, went about selling their youth and beauty.

The masses: Lakhs of Afghans, Turks, Kurds and Mongols in the armies of Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Durrani were billeted in people's houses. They were frequently plundered by all intruders. In a word their sufferings knew no bounds. A brief narration of these heart-rending incidents is given below:

Nadir Gardi

Massacre of 11 March, 1739: As Afghanistan was a part of the Mughal Empire, the passes on the north-west frontier were left unguarded. Nasir Khan was the governor of Afghanistan, a deficit province. He received no money from Delhi, and his army had been in arrears of pay from 1733 to 1738. He was easily defeated by Nadir Shah. Panjab was under Zakariya Khan. He was an able ruler; but he was instructed by two highest nobles of the Mughal court, Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf Jah, founder of Hyderabad State and Saadat Khan, Nawab of Oudh, to admit Nadir Shah into Lahore.[1]

Nadir Shah was a Turk, not an Irani. His army consisted of Turks, Kurds and Mongols, all ferocious and fiery men. After the battle of Karnal Nadir Shah had agreed to return to his country for an indemnity of fifty lakhs of rupees. The peace negotiations were conducted by Nizam-ul-Mulk. As a price he demanded from Emperor Muhammad Shah the post of Mir Bakhshi or defence minister and commander-in-chief for his son Firoz Jang. This post had been promised to Saadat Khan of Oudh. He instigated Nadir Shah to go to Delhi where he would get 50 crores instead of 50 lakhs. Nadir reached Delhi at the head of three and a half lakhs of men.

In the afternoon on 10 March some hooligans raised shouts that Nadir Shah had been murdered in the Red Fort. The people without any verification of the news began murdering Nadir's soldiers

[1]Contemporary historian Shakir Khan of Panipat, quoted by Irvine, in *Later Mughals*, II, 325, fn.

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billeted in their homes. About 3,000 of them were killed. On Sunday, 11 March, Nadir ordered a general massacre which continued from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., when it was stopped as a result of Muhammad Shah's entreaties. About 20,000 persons were killed and a few thousand more, mostly women, drowned themselves in wells.

Two months of rape and rapine, March to May, 1739

All the property of many nobles was confiscated. All wives and daughters of Mir Bakhshi Khan-e-Dauran who had been killed in the battle of Karnal were violated by Nadir Shah himself.[1] On 26 March Nadir Shah married his younger son Nasrullah to a great granddaughter of Aurangzeb. He then ransacked the imperial palace. He seized all the crown jewels worth fifty crores, peacock throne, Koh-e-Nur diamond, all the cash and gold in the imperial treasury worth one crore, richest clothes, carpets, rugs, utensils, 300 elephants, 10,000 camels, 10,000 horses and many other things.[2]

After the royal family came the turn of the nobles. Wazir Qamar-ud-din Khan was ordered to stand in the sun, and was forced to pay one crore of rupees, besides jewellery, horses and elephants. One ear of Diwan Majlis Rae was cut off. He committed suicide. The vakil of the Governor of Bengal was publicly beaten. He together with all the members of his family took poison.

The common people were not spared. All the houses were counted and numbered, and a certain amount was fixed on each. In most of the houses sufferings of the people exceeded all bounds. "No barbarities were left unpractised. The tax imposed was strictly exacted."[3]

The total amount of plunder secured by Nadir Shah was estimated by Frazer at 70 crores, and by the author of *Bayan* at 80 crores. Nadir also annexed all the Mughal territory west of the Indus including Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Sind, N.W.F. province and four districts of Aurangabad (Jehlam) Gujrat, Sialkot and Pasrur called Chahar Mahal. He left Delhi on May 5, 1739, on account of excessive heat.

Shah Gardi

17 January-22 February, 1757: Ahmad Shah Durrani had already seized Panjab and Kashmir in 1752. He was invited again by

[1]Ashob, II, 375.
[2]Anandram, 51; Hanway, II, 383.
[3]Frazer, 199; Hanway, II, 382; Irvine, II, 372-73.

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Emperor Alamgir II, Najib-ud-daulah Rohilla and Mughlani Begam of Lahore. Abdali's advance-guard under Jahan Khan reached Delhi without any opposition on 17 January, 1757. The Afghans took to plunder. The Mughalia soldiers joined in looting people. Houses and shops were all sacked. The Durrani married his son Timur Shah to the daughter of Alamgir II on 30 January. On February 4, 1757 one hundred beautiful wives of ex-Wazir Intizam-ud-daulah were carried away by Abdali for himself. The houses of all nobles were dug up in search of buried hoards. The Afghans and Najib-ud-daulah's Rohilla soldiery continued looting and raping indiscriminately. "All the days and nights cries of distress continued." The entire city was divided into wards, and in each ward military posts were established. All the houses were numbered. A regular levy was imposed on each. Abusing, beating, torturing and slaying were frequently resoted to. No man escaped punishment and no young woman defilement.[1]

31 March to 10 April, 1757: The imperial capital was sacked again. On 5 April the Durrani married 16-year-old daughter of Emperor Muhammad Shah. His army plundered people again. Thousands of handsome boys and pretty girls were seized and carried off by his soldiery. On their departure the people, offered congratulations (*mubarikbad*) to one another.[2]

14-27 January, 1760: Ahmad Shah Abdali's fifth invasion took place at the invitation of Emperor Alamgir II, Najib-ud-daulah and the great theologian of Delhi Shah Walliullah. The Abdali stayed in Delhi from 14 to 27 January, 1760. The well known Urdu poet Mir Dard, the head of the Chishti family and spiritual leader of Naqshband order gave a graphic account of the atrocities committed by the Afghans and Rohillas:

"I was present in the city. In the evening (14 January) it was announced that the Shah had granted amnesty and that nobody should worry. But immediately after nightfall these freebooters commenced committing atrocities. They carried off everything. The following morning was the doomsday. All the Durrani and Rohilla armies fell upon the city, and carried fire and sword through it. They broke open the gates of the city, and took people captives. A large number of them were burnt alive. Many were beheaded,

[1] *Delhi Chronicle*, based on almost daily personal experience and observation: and reports received in the capital *Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 100b-101a.

[2] ibid.

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and subjected to all sorts of tyranny. Their brutalities continued for three days and nights. No victuals and clothing were left. The roofs and walls of houses were demolished. All men were wandering in bazars and streets. Their women and children were captives. The plunderers crowded in the city and murder continued unchecked. All lost their honour and chastity. A large part of the city was burnt to ashes. This state of affairs continued for seven or eight days. The tumult of these plunderers reached the seventh heaven."[1]

29 February-23 March, 1760: The armies of Ahmad Shah Abdali and Najib-ud-daulah came again to Delhi "and plundered the people of Delhi to an extreme."[2] Tahmas Khan Miskin was then present in Delhi. He gives a graphic account of the Afghan and Rohilla pillage of the city:

"Next day the whole of the Durrani army entered the city, and started looting and murdering the people. I marched towards Durrani's camp in the company of my five brothers. Fortunately we were not detained by the Durrani soldiers. But one thousand horsemen were there to watch over the city. They seized our horses and other belongings. They were going to kill us, when some one suggested that we should be taken to the city to point out the houses of wealthy people. We reached the city. They asked me to show them the houses of rich men. I tried my level best not to tell them anything in this connection, but they threatened me. Ultimately I had to show them a big house, as there was no way out of this difficulty. They at once broke down the gate of this house and entered it. I jumped from the roof of this house into another street. With great difficulty, I got at a big palace near that street. It was guarded by a contingent of nasqchis. They said in Turkish language, 'Destroy this house also.' As soon as I heard it, I fled to the Emperor's army which was encamped near Luni 10 kms distant. My brother Muqim Beg accompanied me."[3]

While passing through the streets of the city whatever seen by Miskin is described by him thus:

"The Afghan army in conjunction with Najib Khan Rohilla committed such atrocities as cannot be described. A large number of people were slaughtered ruthlessly. Thousands of men andwomen wandered in the bazars and streets terror-stricken and horrified,

[1] *Mir Ki Ap Biti* (Urdu), 121-23.
[2] *Tarikh-e-Muzaffari*, 178.
[3] *Tazkirah*, 204-5.

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and did not dare enter their houses. Many of them were captured by the plunderers. The whole city was ruined. The shops lay open and desolated."[1]

29 January-22 March, 1761: After his victory at Panipat on January 14, 1761, Ahmad Shah Durrani marched upon the capital. The Queen-mother and ex-Empress Zinat Mahal received Ahmad Shah Durrani at Narela, 26 kms north of Delhi, and offered him a nazar of one lakh of rupees and Rs. 50,000 to Wazir Shah Vali Khan. He entered the city on 29 January. He put up in the palace of Shah Jahan's queen Mumtaz Mahal, and allowed his soldiery to live in the houses of people. They lived in the city up to 22 March and repeated their horrible activities unchecked.[2]

Afterwards Ahmad Shah Abdali made half a dozen attempts to reach Delhi, but the Sikhs stood in his way, and he could not arrive at the imperial capital again.

Rohilla Gardi

August-September, 1753: Imad-ul-Mulk recruited 15,000 Rohillas under Najib Khan who were set upon prime minister Safdar Jang also Nawab of Oudh. They plundered vast number of people. No man's riches and no woman's honour remained safe from these brigands.[3]

November-December, 1753: A sum of 25 lakhs of rupees was due to Najib. The Emperor paid him 4 lakhs in cash, and for the balance assigned him territory in the Ganga Doāb. Najib left Delhi on 26 November, 1753.

"But immediately after crossing the Jamuna they invested Patparganj and seizing the headman of the place, demanded lakhs of rupees from that mart and beat him; they did the same thing at Shahdara, and after forcibly occupying the toll-offices (*nākā*) on the river bank robbed the wayfarers. They left Patparganj only after taking Rs. 35,000."[4]

11 August, 1757: On this day Najib's Rohillas, about 25,000, plundered the mansion house of prime minister Imad-ul-Mulk,

[1]ibid, 207.

[2]Ghulam Ali, II, 186-88; *S.P.D.*, II, 142; XXI, 202; *Delhi Chronicle*, Sarkar, in II, 374-76.

[3]*Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi*, 55b-59a; *Chahar Gulzar-e-Shujai*, 411b; *Bayan*, 279; *Imad-us-Saadat*, 64; *Siyar*, III, 47.

[4]*Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi*, 67a, 87a-88b, 121a, translation by Sarkar, I, 286.

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deliberately, violated the chastity of all the women living there, and ravaged the neighbouring mohallas.

17 December, 1772: Zabita Khan, son of Najib-ud-daulah, supported by Marathas, invaded Delhi, where a battle was fought with the imperialists on 17 December, 1772. Zabita won the day. His troops in conjunction with the Marathas plundered several parts of the city. The Emperor submitted to him, and appointed him Mir Bahshi or head of the army.[1]

1st July, 1788: Ghulam Qadir, son of Zabita Khan Rohilla, "mercilessly robbed the populous cities of Shahdara, Patparganj and Ghaziabad, which were rich emporia of the trade of the Doäb coming to feed the capital."[2]

18 July to 2 October, 1788: Ghulam Qadir became supreme in the imperial capital and the last Afghan occupation of Delhi lasted from 18 July to 2 October. Unspeakable oppression was committed on the royal family. Princes and princesses were kept standing in the burning sun. They were tortured and princesses were dishonoured. Twenty-one princes and princesses were starved to death. Many more died of hunger and thirst. All floors and ceilings of the palaces were dug. Ghulam Qadir's wife admitted that cash, gold and jewellery worth 25 crores fell into her husband's hands. On 10 August Ghulam Qadir threw Shah Alam on the ground, sat on his breast, his hands and feet were held by his ruffians, and with his own sharp-pointed dagger, the Rohilla fiend took out the eyes of his majesty. Tauntingly he asked the Emperor if he could see anything "Nothing but the Koran between thee and me," as Ghulam Qadir had previously taken an oath of loyalty on the sacred Book. The Rohilla soldiery committed all sorts of crimes in the city.

Turk Gardi

March-April, 1754: The Mughal army consisted mainly of Turkish also called Mughalia soldiery. They were the best fighters. In the second half of the eighteenth century their salary generally remained in arrears. Hence this fine army was converted into a rabble. They invariably resorted to plunder. Here only a few incidents which happened only in three years are mentioned. The salary of Sindāgh risālā remained unpaid for one year. On March

[1]Sarkar, III, 74-75.
[2]ibid, 439.

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20, 1754, they plundered Hindu shopkeepers, in particular jewellers. All the rich persons were seized. They were released on receiving ransom on 8-9 April. They pillaged the customs posts. The employees in the Red Fort did not come out for fear and remained without food for one day and night. They ravaged Jama Masjid area and Faiz bazar. No trader or merchant or a rich banker escaped their atrocities.[1]

June, 1754: Another section of the Mughal army was called Mughalia troops. They were also Turks. Their salary for three years was in arrears. They plundered houses everyday. The Muslim nobles defended their residences with the help of their retainers. Only the business and industrial class remained exposed to the attacks of Turkish soldiery.[2]

June 21, 1754: The Wazir's artillery soldiers surrounded their master's house. They roughly handled Aqibat Mahmud, his household superintendent, and tore off his clothes. He saved himself by issuing an order on a banker. Imad, the Wazir, murdered Aqibat in the night for paying the soldiers.

The palace guards threw stones on the Finance Minister, Raja Nāgarmal on 14 August, 1754. The Badakhshani soldiers carried off Raja's deputy Kishan Chand to Mughalpura. He was suspended from the roof by the legs and beaten for 15 days. Neither the Emperor nor the Wazir came to his rescue.

On 3 September, 1754-1756: the Badakhshanis plundered a noble's house. A Badakhshani soldier fired upon the Wazir, but he escaped unhurt. On 5 September the musketeers of the Red Fort closed the palace gates and stopped the coming and going of the people. The Sindagh troops dragged away women. They pillaged the houses of Hakumat Rae and Thakur Das, superintendents of the royal harem. On 23 October they pushed their paymaster out of his palanquin. The Badakhshani soldiers plundered Raja Nagamal's house on 14 November. On 18 November they sacked the bazars around Jama Masjid and Qudsia Masjid. At the close of November, Wazir's grandmother, Sholapuri Begam, was not allowed to enter his house. When the Wazir came to receive her he was publicly and loudly abused. In the beginning of December they

[1] *Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi*, 115b, 119b, 121a-24a, 125a, 127a; *Tarikh-e-Muzaffari*, 85-86.
[2] *Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 20b.

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entered the Wazir's kitchen and ate everything available there. Such incidents continued daily.[1]

The worst scene of this sad drama took place at Panipat on May 3, 1755. The Wazir was staying in the biggest mansion in the city. About 250 Badakhshani troops in his service raised a tumult at the gate of his residence. The Wazir had just finished his bath. Having wrapped a piece of cloth round his loins he peeped through the gate to see what the matter was. He was immediately seized. Two men held him by the arms, and dragged him barefoot and half naked in the burning sun through the bazars and streets of the city to their camp three and a half kms away, abusing, insulting and beating him all the way. Three thousand soldiers surrounded him, made him sit on bare ground and insulted him for two hours.[2]

Mir Bakhshi Samsam-ud-daulah died on 23 July, 1756. The soldiers stopped his burial until promise was made to clear their arrears. They did not allow people to say Friday prayer at the Jama Masjid on 23 July, 1756.[3]

Emperor Alamgir II lay encamped at Luni 10 kms south-west in July, 1756. Towards the end of the month he called two of his wives to join him. The palace was under the control of rebellious artillerymen. The two queens dressed as maid-servants in an ordinary burqa came out of the fort to a water carrier's house. They wore the dress of his wives, rode on his bullocks and reached the Emperor's camp.[4]

On August 29, 1756, the guards in the Red Fort cut off all supplies and starved the members and servants of the royal family for a day.[5]

After a few days Shakir Khan, diwan of Crown Prince Ali Gauhar, later known as Emperor Shah Alam II, brought an earthen mug of broth from a charitable kitchen for his master. The prince sent it into the harem where royal ladies had not lighted fire in the kitchen, and had not tasted anything for three days.

The continued starvation forced the young princesses to throw off their veils and to rush out of the palace by a back door to beg

[1] *Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 16b-17b, 18a, 20a-b, 22b, 26a-b, 29b, 30a-32b, 37b.
[2] *Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 48b-51a; *Tarikh-e-Muzaffari*, 109-10; *Siyar*, III, 52; Sarkar, II, 45-46.
[3] *Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 75b-76a.
[4] *Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 76b-78a.
[5] ibid, 78b-79a.

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food in public streets. They were caught and brought in. They sat in men's quarters weeping and crying for one day and night.[1]

Baluch Gardi

June, 1753: During the civil war in May, 1753, Mir Bakhshi Imad-ul-Mulk employed a Baluch regiment of about 2,000 men under Bahadur Khan Baluch, founder of Bahadurgarh, 30 kms west of Delhi. These ferocious men plundered large number of men in the city.[2]

Gujar Gardi

June, 1753: Imad-ul-Mulk, the Mir Bakhshi, was against Safdar Jang, who was prime minister. A civil war began between them. Imad recruited Rohillas, Jats, and 2,000 Gujars under their leader Jit Singh. They joined him on June 2, 1753. These people made full use of this opportunity by plundering the people of the capital.[3]

January, 1774: The Gujars plundered Delhi the whole night on January 18, 1774.[4]

Jat Gardi

May, 1753: Safdar Jang became prime minister of the Mughal Empire in 1748. He was an Irani Shia. The Mughal Emperors, most of their bobles and almost all military generals were Turanis and Sunnis. Hence a struggle began between Iranis and Turanis. In this civil war Safdar Jang got the support on payment of Marathas, Jats and Gujars. The Turanis had on their side Turkish soldiery and Rohilla Afghans. Raja Surajmal of Bharatpur at the head of his Jat army took to plunder. According to the author of *Siyar-ul-Mutakhirin*, the Jat soldiery spared neither property nor women. Even people who had taken refuge in the house of a Muslim saint, Khwajah Muhammad Basit, the spiritual head (*Pir*) of Safdar Jang, were subjected to rape and rapine. On 9 May, 1753, the Jats plundered old Delhi. The area near grain market inhabited by traders and merchants was squeezed. A large number of women killed themselves to save their honour. On 10 May they ravaged Abdullahnagar close to Jaisinghpura, Tarkaganj, Sayyidwara and

[1] ibid, 190a-b.
[2] *Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi*, 55b-59a; *Chahar Gulzar-e-Shujai*, 411b.
[3] ibid.
[4] *Delhi Chronicle*, 273.

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region of Bijal Masjid. "The Jats plundered up to the gate of the city, lakhs and lakhs were looted, the houses were demolished, and all the suburbs (puras) and Churania and Vakilpura were rendered totally lampless."[1]

18 November, 1764: Jawahir Singh while fighting against Najib plundered vast stores of grain at Shahdara. Houses were dug in search of buried hoards and then set on fire.[2]

January, 1765: Najib-ud-daulah killed Surajmal in a battle at Delhi on December 25, 1763. His son Jawahir Singh attacked Najib at the capital in January, 1765. On January 9, 1765 Najib-ud-daulah was defeated. He retired into the Red Fort. The city fell into the hands of Jawahir Singh. In another battle on January 25, 1765, the Horse Market (Nakhas) and Sabzi Mandi were ruined.[3]

Maratha Gardi

April, 1737: Peshwa Baji Rao appeared at Kalkaji, 10 kms south of Delhi on April 9, 1737. He captured some elephants and camels which had been let loose for grazing, and plundered some people. He encamped for the night at Talkatora, 5 kms from the city. Emperor Muhammad Shah sent a Hindu in the disguise of a beggar in the Maratha camp to gather full information about them. He went even to the Peshwa's camp. Before the Emperor he poured from his begging bowl, a handful of dry unsplit parched gram, some pieces of half-cooked, unsalted bajra bread and a few red chillies. This was all which he could get from the messes of sardars and generals.

The Emperor sent an army of 30,000 to expel the Marathas. An action was fought at Rikabganj in which imperial troops were defeated. The Mughals lost 600 men in killed and wounded, 2,000 horses and one elephant. Baji Rao's mistress Mastani, riding a tall horse, fought by the side of her lover.[4]

25 April-4 May, 1752: Wazir Safdar Jang invited a Maratha army of 50,000 on payment of 50 lakhs of rupees. The Marathas arrived in Delhi on April 25, 1752. As the money promised was not paid, the Marathas began to plunder people. "Thousands were ruined by

[1]*Siyar*, III, 47-48; *Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi*, 55b; *Bayan*, 278-79; Shakir, 74; *Chahar Gulzar-e-Shujai*, 410a; Sarkar, I, 271.

[2]Sarkar, II, 463.

[3]*C.P.C.* I, 2533A.

[4]Ashob, 114b-24b; Rustam Ali, 273b; Irvine, II, 291-97.

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their oppression and the surrounding country was desolated. On the west bank of Jamuna towards Badli, and other places not a village remained unplundered."[1]

November-December, 1753: Khande Rao, son of Malhar Rao Holkar, reached Delhi on November 21, 1753. As usual his troops lived on plundering the people.[2]

May, 1754: Towards the end of April, 1754 Emperor Ahmad Shah lay encamped at Sikandarabad, 50 kms south of capital with his harem containing 350 women and treasures. At midnight between 25-26 May, 20,000 Marathas under Malhar Rao Holkar attacked the royal camp. This was the fourth day of the new moon, and there was pitch dark. The Emperor together with his mother, one of his favourite queens, his young son and his half-sister Sahiba Begam managed to escape to Delhi. All the men servants fled away. No torch-bearer was seen anywhere and there was no light even of fire. The Maratha soldiery caught hold of women including queens and princesses, removed their jewellery, tore off their clothes and raped them in the open on sand. Many women, almost naked, were dragged to their camp. The Maratha soldiers raped women in gangs. Such was their shameful and abominable conduct. Whatever was left in the camp was carried away by the Jats and Gujars of the neighbourhood. Later in the day Malika-e-Zamani, widow of Emperor Muhammad Shah, a captive in the Maratha camp, rebuked Malhar Rao Holkar who slapped his face, pleaded his innocence and paid two lakhs of rupees as self-imposed fine.[3]

May-June, 1754: On 31 May the Marathas plundered Jaisinghpura, its neighbourhood, Nizam-ud-din area, and Khurma Mart.[4]

November-December, 1754: On November 14, 1754, fighting broke out between Wazir Imad-ul-Mulk and Marathas. It continued for about a month. The Marathas slaughtered many people. On 9 December they plundered the bazars on the river bank including Brahmans at the Jamuna Ghat. Many other places were ruined. Timber from house roofs was removed to the camp for fire.[5]

[1] *Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi*, 33b-37b; *Siyar*, III, 44; Sarkar, I, 205-7.

[2] *Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi*, 99b-100b.

[3] *Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi*, 125b-131a; Siyar, III, 49; Shakir, 77; *Tarikh-e-Muzaffari*, 89-92; *Bayan*, 283-84; *S.P.D.*, XXI, 60; Sarkar, I, 1971 edition, pp. 334-37.

[4] *Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi*, 131b-134b.

[5] *Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 35b-36a.

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January, 1757: On the approach of Ahmad Shah Abdali, the people with their cash, jewellery, women and children began to flee from the city. Wazir Imad-ul-Mulk closed the city gates and ordered 3,000 Maratha horsemen to stop the exodus, while he had sent his family and property to Rajasthan. The Marathas plundered these helpless persons.[1]

11 August, 1757: Fighting broke out in the capital between Najib and Marathas. The latter plundered many parts of the city including Sabzi Mandi.[2]

January, 1758: The Marathas plundered Shahdara, adjoining villages, Sarai Rohilla and suburbs outside Delhi gate.[3]

17 December, 1772: A serious battle was fought between Emperor Shah Alam II and the Marathas under Visaji Krishna and Tukoji on Friday, 17 December, 1772 at Purana Qila, Delhi. The Emperor had in his service European trained regiments and artillery under Rene Madec. But the Marathas won the day on account of superior generalship to that of the Mughal commanders. The Marathas then ransacked the mansion of Ghazi-ud-din where Karim Khan trader had kept his goods valued at several lakhs, about 40 horses and a few elephants. Emperor's two elephants near Delhi gate also fell into their hands. Sadullah Khan's market was also pillaged.[4]

Sikh Gardi

April, 1766: The Sikhs plundering Najib's jagirs on their way beyond Panipat reached Delhi. At their approach near the imperial capital, Afzal Khan, Najib's officer in charge of the capital, proclaimed on April 15, 1766, by the beat of drum that nobody from the city should go out to visit Kalka Devi. On April 17 the Sikhs marched from Okhlaghat and looted rice and sugar in the Paharganj Mart. Some camels and bullocks were carried off by them at the Bain of Shaikh Muhammad. Only one Sikh was killed by Afzal Khan.[5]

January, 1770: In January, 1770, the Sikhs ravaged Najib's estates

[1]ibid, 87a-88a.
[2]Sarkar, II, 140, 148.
[3]ibid, 201.
[4]Khair-ud-din, I, 214-8; Munna Lal, 135-40; Ghulam Ali, III, 7-12; Sarkar, III, 72-3.
[5]*Delhi Chronicle*, 207; Nur-ud-din, 108a.

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south of Panipat, and arrived at Delhi on January 10, 1770, but they were driven away by Zabita Khan. "The whole country about Delhi is up in arms: the Sikhs, Rohillas Morattas are all in motion,"[1] a report stated.

February, 1770: Father Perre Wendal, the French missionary at Agra, wrote on 1st March, 1770, that the Sikhs were plundering the neighbourhood of Delhi.[2]

January, 1774: Plundering the upper Ganga Doāb from Saharanpur, the Sikhs appeared near Delhi in January, 1774. On January 18, 1774 "the Sikhs devastated Shahdara till midnight, and departed with fifty boys (for ransom) when there still remained an hour and a half of night."[3]

October, 1774: The Sikh army was "hovering in the neighbourhood of Shahjahanabad."[4]

July, 1775: "On the 15th July, 1775, the Sikhs set on fire and destroyed Paharganj and Jaisinghpura." The imperial troops offered some resistance, and about sixty persons were killed on both sides.[5]

October-November, 1776: Najaf Khan, Prime Minister of the Mughal Empire, wrote to Major Hannay that the Sikhs "began to create disturbances in and around the Capital" in October-November, 1776.[6]

March-April, 1778: Tahmas Khan Miskin who led an expedition at the head of 200 Turkish horsemen against the Sikhs wrote:

"Two Sikhs were realising tribute from a village 12 kms from Shahjahanabad. They took to flight on my approach."[7]

September-October, 1778: In September, 1778, the Sikhs came to Delhi again, and their lawless activities continued up to the end of November. A diarist of the imperial capital recorded:

September 23, 1778: Abdul Ahad's lieutenant "Bahram Quli Khan welcomed and entertained with a feast Sahib Singh (Khondah) and other chiefs who lay encamped near the Shalamar Gardens. Mallu Khan, son of Najib-ud-daulah, who was with the

[1] *Bengal Past and Present*, XI, Part I, July-September, 1915, p. 37.
[2] N.A.I., Bengal Select Committee, 28 March, 1770, pp. 120-24.
[3] *Delhi Chronicle*, 273.
[4] *C.P.C.*, IV, 1359, 1538.
[5] ibid, 1721; Forrest, II, 442; *Delhi Chronicle*, 289.
[6] *C.P.C.*, V, 376.
[7] *Tazkirah*, 336-37.

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Sikhs came into the city."[1]

September 26, 1778: "Abdul Ahad Khan visited the Sikhs in the garden of Yaqub Ali Khan. They presented him with bows and horses, and he granted them robes of honour."[2]

October 1, 1778: "This was the Dasahra day and the Sikhs riding out went to the Guru's Bungalow near Rikab Ganj, and there demolished a mosque and ravaged the cultivated fields." The same writer observes that "Jihad in path of the Allah" had taught the Sikhs "Jihad in the path of the Guru."[3] The Sikhs stayed in the capital for about a month at the expense of Abdul Ahad Khan.

January-April, 1779: The Sikhs appeared in the vicinity of Delhi in January, 1779. The Emperor was alarmed and he invited Najaf Khan, the first minister of the Empire, from Alwar. Najaf Khan settled terms with the Raja who agreed to pay a tribute of eight lakhs, of which three lakhs was paid at once. He came to Delhi and opened negotiations with the Sikhs for a peaceful settlement. They promised not to raid the crownlands in Meerut district.[4]

April, 1781: On April 12, 1781, the Sikhs sacked Baghpat, 32 kms north of Delhi. Then they laid waste Khekra, 21 kms north of the capital. There was great alarm in the city. Najaf Khan ordered Ram Ratan to prepare balls that could fit in big guns.

On April 16 the Sikhs attacked Shahdara and Patparganj, the suburbs of Delhi. The residents of these places fled away. The people as far as Rewari, 80 kms. distant, were terrified.

The Emperor sent by his servant Kallu a basket of flowers to Najaf Khan and requested the Wazir to check the Sikhs. Najaf Khan inspected the troops of Murtza Khan and Ghazi Khan, encamped on the bank of the Jamuna opposite Delhi. Ghazi Khan, had 2,500 horse and foot, and Murtza Khan 600 horse and 1,000 foot, all of whom were ready to march against the Sikhs. With an hour of daylight Najaf Khan went out on an elephant for the evening ride, and rode to and fro in the dry bed of the river.[5]

March, 1783: A body of 40,000 Sikhs lay encamped at Barari

[1] *Delhi Chronicle*, 310.
[2] ibid, 311.
[3] ibid.
[4] *N.A.I.*, Secret Proceedings, 19th April, 1779, pp. 597-98; *C.P.C.*, V, 1568, 1643.
[5] *Akhbarat*, 153b.

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Ghat on the Jamuna, 16 kms north of Delhi on March 8, 1783. From this place as a base they attacked Malka Ganj and Sabzi Mandi. These places were plundered and then set on fire. Many people were killed at Mughalpura. Prince Mirza Shikoh tried to check them near Qila Mahtabpur, but he suffered a defeat and fled away. The Sikhs broke through the Ajmeri Gate on 9 March and plundered Hauz Qazi. The people of the city took shelter in the Red Fort. The Sikhs attacked the Fort and entered it on 11 March. In the Diwan-e-Am, they placed Jassa Singh Ahluwalia on the throne and called him Badshah Singh. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia challenged him. The Ahluwalia declined the honour and withdrew. The Ramgarhias captured four guns and a large slab of stone. The Emperor made peace with the Sikhs and allowed Baghel Singh to build seven gurdwaras at historic places associated with the Sikhs.[1] The Sikh agents were appointed at Delhi to collect rākhi of crown-lands and of the octroi duties of the city.

July, 1787: On July 23, 1787, the Sikhs attacked Shahdara.[2]

August, 1787: On August 23, 1787, Ghulam Qudir and the Sikhs fought with the imperial guards and defeated them. Madho Rao Phalke, the Maratha chieftain, was sent to oppose them at Shahdara. In the fight many persons were drowned in the river, while a large number were killed and wounded. Shah Nizam-ud-din and Deshmukh were watching the scene from Diwan-e-Khas. They came to the bank of the river and from there showered balls and bullets on the Sikhs for two hours. When the Sikhs came in front of them, they fled back. Carts laden with cash and goods were plundered by soldiers. Phalke saved his men by shutting himself up in the fort of Shahdara, and eventually surrendered. Deshmukh fled away from Delhi in the night at the head of 500 Marathas, and took the Ballabgarh road to Dig. Shah Nizam-ud-din also ran away for his life from the city. Their luggage was plundered on the road.[3]

Comment: The reader will be convinced that among all these plunderers the Sikhs had a better record than others in two respects. In the first place they seldom resorted to torturing men to

[1] *Delhi Chronicle*, 350-51; Khair-ud-din, II, 66; Forrest, *Selections*, III, 1124; Ratan Singh Bhangu, 539-60; Gian Singh, 912-13.

[2] *Intikhab-e-Akhbarat*, 41.

[3] *Intikhab-e-Akhbarat-e-Durbar-e-Mualla wa Mahadji Sindhia Bahadur*, Salar Jang MS.

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make them disclose places of their hidden treasure. Secondly, they never outraged women. The Sikhs plundered like men and not like demons. In all the contemporary records mostly in Persian written generally by Muslims as well as by Maratha agents posted at a number of places in Northern India there is not a single instance either in Delhi or elsewhere in which the Sikhs raised a finger against women in circumstances where there was no external check on them. The Sikhs did not carry their women with them in their raids. They were notorious drunkards. It is said wine and women go together. Even then the Sikhs exhibited marvellous self-control and respect to womanhood. In this respect no other soldiers in the world stand any comparison with the Sikhs of those days. Such were the Khalsa of Guru Gobind Singh, one of the greatest leaders of mankind. Such people could have given an ideal government to the whole of India if they had vision and wisdom.

Poet Sauda's elegy

Muhammad Rafi Ahmad Sauda, the famous Urdu poet, was born and brought up at Delhi and lived there up to 1760 when he shifted to Lucknow. Many of his poems give us a glimpse into the political, administrative and general condition of Delhi during this period. His two poems entitled *Shahr-e-Ashob* (a grief-stricken city) are a fine specimen of the poet's keen observation and personal experience. It is a lengthy poem which presents a vivid picture of the general poverty of aristocracy and the fallen splendour of nobility. The poems present in a superb manner a true picture of the social, economic and cultural condition of the people of Delhi. About the nobles Sauda says:

"If a visitor called upon them, they would see him only if they were in a mood to do so. If he talked about politics, they would turn their faces to the other side, and would ask him to talk of something else."

"Khudā ke wāste Bhāi,
Kuchh aur bāten bol."

The condition of the wealthy people of the upper middle class is described thus:

"The naqdigirs and jagirdars are in such a wretched state that they have sold their swords and shields to the shopkeepers. They do not come out of their houses with arms. They have a staff under arms, and the begging bowl in hand."

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"Baghal ke bīch to sontā hai,
Hāth men kachkol."

About the lofty buildings of the capital Sauda writes:

"The buildings are in such a lamentable condition that we feel depressed to look at them, while formerly their very sight was pleasing. Instead of flower beds waist-deep long grass is standing. Pillars and parapets are lying in a dilapidated condition.

Faulad Khan had been serving as kotwal (city magistrate and police superintendent) for about 25 years previously. Sauda has written a lampoon on Faulad Khan. This poem gives a graphic description of the chaotic condition of the city, as well as a touching account of the Kotwal's corruption. The relations between Faulad Khan and the thieves are reported in the form of a dialogue in verse. Faulad Khan said:

"All of you are my favourites. Now you should not go to the bazar to sell stolen goods. I shall buy them at a reasonable price." One of the thieves replied:

"Sir, you have spoken justly. Let me tell you one thing. There are two customers for your turban. Each of them has offered me ten rupees for it. What will you pay me for it?" The other thief spoke: "I am your slave. I may not be able to steal your turban, as you may not take it off. Besides its price is debatable. But I have spent a sleepless night in order to steal your shawl. Take my labour into consideration, and pay me whatever you think it proper."

The poet tells us that theft was very common in the capital. The roads and streets were infested with thieves. They appeared on their beat immediately after dusk. From evening till morning there were shouts of thieves:

"Shām se subah tak yahi hai shor,
Dauriyo gathri le chalā hai chor;
Ānkh to kis bashar ki lāge hai,
Choron ke dar se fitnā jāge hai."

The people lodged complaints with the Kotwal, who paid no heed to them, and put them off by saying that everybody in society was a thief.

"Kis ko mārun main kis ko dūn gāli,
Chori karne se kaun hai khāli."

Qasidah-e-Tazhik-e-Rozgar is a lampoon upon a horse. In reality it is an elegy of the Mughal army, presenting a portrait of useless soldiers and their worthless horses. If anybody possessed a

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horse, it was starved to a skeleton. No gram or grass was given to it. It was so feeble that it could hardly stand. While passing through the bazar, the butcher and the cobbler enquired of the rider of the horse when it was expected to die:

"Qasāb pūchhtā hai mujhe kab karoge yād,
Umidwār ham bhi hain kahte hain yun chamār."

The soldier rode on this horse, and got ready to march to fight the Marathas. He held whips in both the hands and the reins in his teeth. He wounded his feet by spurring the horse again and again. In front the syce was trying to make it move, and from behind another man was shouting and beating it with a staff. At this sight many people gathered there. Some suggested to put wheels in its feet to make it go, while others advised to tie sails to it so that it could fly. Ultimately the rider reached the battlefield. He was so much frightened that he took off his slippers, held the horse's neck under his arm and fled back to the city.

In another poem Sauda gives a comical description of the hazards and hardships endured by merchants, as they were tormented by the customs-house officials and attendants.[1]

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DELHI, KABUL AND THE SIKHS

Timur Shah Durrani

Emperor Shah Alam II returned from his exile at Allahabad to Delhi on January 6, 1772. His relative Ahmad Shah Durrani, married to the daughter of Emperor Muhammad Shah, died on April 14, 1772. He was succeeded by his son Timur Shah who was married to Emperor Shah Alam's sister. Shah Alam expected to restore the past prestige and power of the Mughal crown with the help of his brother-in-law. He made the tempting offer of payment of two crores of rupees for his expenses.[2] In response to the Emperor's appeal, Timur Shah sent two envoys to Delhi. They arrived at the imperial capital in June, 1774. They informed the Emperor that their master was making preparations to invade India to help him.[3] Timur Shah left for Panjab in November, 1774. His passage was

[1]Shaikh Chand, *Sauda*, 268-76; Ram Babu Saxena, *A History of Urdu Literature*, 64.

[2]Heras J., Durrani Influence in North India, *Islamic Culture*, 1937, p. 509.

[3]*C.P.C.*, IV, 1116.

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obstructed by the Sikhs. He fell back from Attock in January, 1775.[1]

In October, 1775, Shah Alam again invited Timur Shah, and proposed fresh matrimonial alliance between their children.[2] Timur Shah's advance-guard crossed the river Indus at Attock. The guerilla attacks of the Sikhs again stood in his way, and he was forced to retreat.[3] In January, 1777, it was reported that Timur Shah had reached Attock, and was very keen to reach Delhi as soon as possible. But the Sikhs would not allow him to advance in safety, and he retired to Peshawar.[4] As money was badly needed Timur Shah sent his ambassador, Jabbar Khan, to Delhi in March, 1778, to seek help from Indian Princes to organise a confederacy against the Sikhs to enable him to reach Delhi.[5] Timur Shah even proposed an alliance with Maratha Chiefs, Mahadji Sindhia and Tukoji Holkar, against the Sikhs.[6] But nobody was prepared to incur the hostility of the Sikhs.

The need for money and the desire to secure Mughal princesses for his children again impelled Timur Shah to undertake fresh invasion of India in October, 1779. He sent Haji Ali Khan to negotiate with the Sikhs for a free passage to Delhi. The Sikhs tied him to a tree, and shot him dead. Timur Shah avoided penetrating into the heart of the Panjab. He marched along the eastern bank of river Indus and seized Multan from the Sikhs on February 18, 1780.

Shah Alam made frantic appeals to Timur Shah for help. He even suggested that the Shah should advance by way of Multan, Bahawalpur and Bikaner.[7] A newsletter of the Delhi court dated September 19, 1780, stated that Najaf Khan and Zabita Khan had received letters from Timur Shah.[8] On September 25, 1780, it was recorded that Timur Shah asked Ranjit Dev of Jammu, Muzaffar Khan of Multan and Zabita Khan of Ghausgarh, to collect grain and other supplies for his army.[9] In the winter of 1780 Timur Shah, marching along river Indus came to Multan and realized tribute

[1]ibid, 1121.

[2]N.A.I., *Foreign Department*, Forrest, Selections from the letters, despatche and other state papers, II, 412.

[3]ibid, *Secret Consultations*, February 26, 1776, no. 22, pp. 6-7.

[4]ibid, no. 16, p. 3.

[5]Munna Lal, *Tarikh-e-Shah Alam*, 206.

[6]*C.P.C.*, V, 1449, 1639.

[7]*Dilliyethil*, I, 266.

[8]British Museum, Or., 25, 021, 11, 11a.

[9]ibid, 21a.

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from Bahawalpur, but did not proceed farther.[1] A newsletter of November 5, 1780, stated:

"The Sikhs of Lahore, about 20,000 horse attacked Timur Shah's military post near Multan. The Afghans sued for peace. The Sikhs realized *rākhi* and returned to their places. They are realizing rākhi in all directions."[2]

In the beginning of 1783, Timur Shah and his wazir wrote letters to the Peshwa to join him against the Sikhs. Timur's brother, Sikandar Shah, reached Delhi.[3] Timur Shah invaded India in December, 1785. He restored his authority in Kashmir and went back. Shah Alam frantically appealed to Timur Shah to come to his help.[4] In September, 1787, Timur Shah sent a force of 1,500 horse, 5,000 foot, and 1,700 camel riders. Their path was blocked at Attock by the Sikhs. The commander led this army along the western bank of the Indus. The Sikhs advanced opposite them along the eastern bank of the same river. Having covered some distance he retired to Peshawar and then to Kabul.[5]

When Ghulam Qadir Rohilla occupied Delhi, Shah Alam made piteous appeals to Timur Shah. He then learnt the news that Shah Alam had been deposed on 30 July, 1788, and blinded on 10 August. To punish the Rohilla barbarian, Timur Shah left Kabul in October, 1788. Avoiding the Sikhs on the way, he reached Bahawalpur at the end of December, 1788. From there he returned to Afghanistan.[6]

This was Timur Shah's last attempt to help his Delhi kinsman. Afterwards only a few news items are available in contemporary records. In January, 1790, a friendly letter from Timur Shah was received by Shah Alam.[7] Ex-prime minister Ghazi-ud-din Khan, his son Jilani Khan and Prince Ahsan Bakht, son of Emperor Shah Alam, were on their way to Kabul via Kangra in May, 1790, to seek Timur Shah's help.[8] Ghazi-ud-din Khan was received at Kabul

[1]ibid, 24b, 275b, 295a, 301b; *Husain Shahi*, 110-13; *Tarikh-e-Sultani*, 155-56; *IASB*, XVII, II, 568 70.

[2]British Museum, *Persian MS.*, Or , 25, 021, 354b. [3]ibid, 85a.

[4]N.A.I., *Secret Letters to the Court of Directors*, January 9, 1786, V, paragraph 48.

[5]*Salar Jang Persian MS*, no. 4, 329, pp. 190-91.

[6]N.A.I., *Secret Letters to Court*, VII, 10 August, 1789, p. 692.

[7]*Dilliyethil*, II, Additional, 5.

[8]Parasnis, *Itihasa Sangraha* in *Maratha Affairs ot Delhi*, II, 15; *Indian Historical Records Commission Proceedings*, XIII, 1930, p. 92.

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by Shah Zaman, son of Timur Shah on September 26, 1790.[1] Ahsan Bakht reached Kabul long afterwards, and was warmly received by Timur Shah in December,[2] 1791. Timur Shah's letter was received by Shah Alam on September 11, 1792. Timur Shah died at Kabul on May 18, 1793. Ferrier believed that the Shah had been poisoned by one of the women of his harem.[3]

Shah Zaman

Timur Shah was succeeded by his 23-year-old son, Shah Zaman He wished to establish an Afghan Empire in India.[4] Emperor Shah Alam turned to him for help.[5] His agent Ghulam Muhammad waited on Emperor Shah Alam. He assured him that Shah Zaman was anxious to restore the glory of the Mughal throne. The Emperor said that the House of Babar could not sustain itself without the Shah's help.[6] The Emperor suggested that he would offer the Shah in marriage two royal princesses, his own daughter as well as his grand-daughter, daughter of his son Akbar Shah whom he wanted to be acknowledged as his successor.[7]

Shah Zaman's first invasion of India took place in December, 1793. His advance-guard was opposed by the Sikhs 50 kms east of Attock. The Shah gave up the idea of following the direct road to Delhi via Lahore. He decided to march through Multan, Bahawalpur and Bikaner. Prince Ahsan Bakht of Delhi was in his camp. He suggested that the Shah should negotiate with Ranjit Singh for a safe passage.[8] The Shah marched across Derajat to the west of river Indus, and then returned to Peshawar and Kabul.

Shah Alam II was in regular correspondence with Shah Zaman. He was pressing the Shah to invade India. On Shah Zaman's failure to reach Delhi, Shah Alam remarked in a durbar: "Nobody invades India which has no opposition to offer."[9] Shah Zaman left

[1]Parasnis, op. cit., II, 34.
[2]*Dilliyethil*, II, Additional, 24, 40.
[3]Ferrier, *History of the Afghans*, 104.
[4]*Akhbarat British Museum*, Or., 4, 609, folio 96b.
[5]N.A.I., *Political Consultations*, December 5, 1796, nos. 20-22.
[6]ibid.
[7]N.A.I., *Political Proceedings*, September 19, 1796, no. 15; October 28, 1796, no. 19; December 5, 1796, nos. 20-22; March 6, 1797, no. 12.
[8]*Dilliyethil*, II, 104.
[9]*British Museum Persian Akhbarat*, Or. 4, 609, folios 89b, 90a, 96b, 125a-b; *Rieu*, I, *Additional*, 24, 036, folios 196b, 197a, 259a.

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Kabul to invade India a second time in November, 1795. His advance-guard was driven back across river Indus at Attock by the Sikhs.[1] Shah Zaman set up his headquarters at Hasan Abdal, 53 kms east of Attock and 46 kms west of Rawalpindi. He sent a strong force ahead which seized Rohtas. The Sikhs fell back to Wazirabad on the banks of river Chenab. The news of the fall of Rohtas reached Delhi on January 23, 1796.[2] On account of disturbances in Afghanistan Shah Zaman returned to Kabul.

In response to Shah Alam's pressing appeals, Shah Zaman's messenger arrived at Delhi in July, 1796.[3] Another messenger met Ranjit Singh to help the Shah in passing through the Panjab safely. Ranjit Singh replied that he would meet him in the battlefield.[4] Shah Zaman left Kabul in October, 1796. Milkha Singh fought an engagement to the east of Attock and then retired to Rohtas. A number of skirmishes took place between the Afghans and the Sikhs.

Shah Alam II greatly rejoiced at Shah Zaman's advance into the Panjab. He sent messengers to wait upon the Shah with the offer of paying him Rs. 50,000 for every day of marching and Rs. 25,000 for a halt.[5]

Shah Zaman entered Lahore on January 1, 1797. On 11 January, a body of Shah's troops was defeated by the Sikhs at Amritsar. The Shah despatched his full army to Amritsar to punish the Sikhs. Fifty thousand Sikhs engaged them in battle, and defeated the Shah on 12 January. A report stated that the Shah lost 20,000 men and the Sikhs 15,000 men. Shah Alam II and his son Akbar Shah solicited Shah Zaman to reach Delhi. The Shah was constantly harassed by the Sikhs who forced him to retreat homeward on January 20, 1797. He arrived at Kabul on March 17, 1797.[6]

Shah Zaman's next invasion took place in October, 1798. He entered Lahore on November 30, 1798. The Shah's arrival at Lahore greatly delighted Shah Alam and his son Akbar Shah. The Shah sent a message to Akbar Shah that he would soon arrive at

[1]Rieu, I, Additional, 24, 036, folios 439a-b.

[2]*Delhi Chronicle*, 434; *Akhbarat British Museum*, Or. 4, 608, folios 200a-b, 201b.

[3]*Sindhia's Affairs*, 1794-1799.

[4]N.A.I., *Persian Letters Received*, nos. 336, 402, 547; *Political Proceedings, Foreign Department*, October 28, 1796, no. 22; *Secret Letters to Court*, 1794-96, X, 360-61.

[5]N.A.I., *Secret Department*, January 23, 1797, p. 46.

[6]*Sindhia's Affairs*, 1794-1799.

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Delhi to settle the affairs of the Empire.[1] Koraush Sultana Begam, daughter of Timur Shah by the Mughal princess, a sister of Shah Alam, informed her maternal uncle from Lahore that she would soon meet him at Delhi along with Shah Zaman.[2] Shah Alam and Akbar Shah replied that they would receive the Shah at Panipat.[3] The Shah could not overcome the opposition of the Sikhs. The Sikhs started laying waste the whole country within a radius of 150 kms of Shah's camp to stop supplies. They frequently engaged him in skirmishes. Besides disturbances broke out in Afghanistan. He left Lahore on January 4, 1799. He reached Peshawar on January 30, 1799. This was the last Muslim invasion of India, and the hopes of Shah Alam and crown prince Akbar Shah to revive the power of the Mughal Empire with foreign help were shattered for good.[4]

Note: The British also managed to govern this country by importing at short intervals fresh rulers, administrators and generals, and by forbidding them to settle in this country.

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[1]N.A.I., *Secret Proceedings*, January 4, 1799, no. 26.
[2]ibid, no. 29.
[3]ibid, no. 8.
[4]N.A.I., *Political Proceedings*, January 25, 1799, no. 28; January 28, 1799, no. 16; May 10, 1799, no. 7; *Sindhia's Affairs*, 1794-1799, J. Collins to the Governor-General, January 10, 1799; Elphinstone, 572; Sohan Lal, II, 39.

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CHAPTER 21

A Review

In the third quarter of the eighteenth century in India there were four great leaders. Ahmad Shah Abdali in the north, his able lieutenant Najib-ud-daulah at Delhi, Surajmal, the Jat Raja of Bharatpur and Peshwa Balaji Baji Rao who had extended Maratha power upto Attock. Najib and Ahmad Shah supported by Indian Muslims crushed the Marathas in the third battle of Panipat in January, 1761, and Balaji Baji Rao died shortly afterwards. Najib killed Surajmal in December, 1763. The Sikhs had been a suppressed people for half a century being ground down to dust, about two lakhs of whom were destroyed in cold blood both by the Mughals and the Afghans. But they rose like a suppressed flame after every attempt to annihilate them. They created a wall of steel between Panjab and Afghanistan, and did not allow the Abdali after 1767 to have a free passage through their homeland. He died a broken-hearted man in April, 1772.

Najib held high up the banner of Islam in India from 1757 to 1770. The continuous attacks of the Sikhs on Najib's territory in the Ganga Doāb and north of Delhi gave him so much frustration at a wild-goose chase that he broke down and sank into the grave in October, 1770. His son and successor Zabita Khan became a Sikh under the name of Dharam Singh. Zabita Khan's widow and son took refuge with Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, and lived upon a jagir granted by him with residence near Talwara at the foot of the Shiwalik Hills.

The successors of Ahmad Shah Abdali, Najib-ud-daulah, Balaji Baji Rao and Surajmal were all pigmies as compared with these giants. The Mughal Emperor, Shah Alam II, had neither the energy nor the resources to save his declining kingdom. During the past

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eight hundred years of Muslim rule in India there was not a single Indian Musalman who rose to any key-post. The Muslim rule in India was a foreign rule. It was preserved by importing foreign blood both from Central Asia and Iran. This was now stopped by the Sikhs. Hence the Islamic power in India was on its last legs towards the close of the third quarter of the eighteenth century for want of fresh administrators and generals from the north-west. The great Rajput leaders had been killed in Mughal service on the north-west frontier and in civil wars of the Mughals and their own.

Regarding the Mughal Empire and the Durrani Empire offering a favourable situation to the Sikhs a poet observed:

Udhar Delhi ki saltanat men fatūr,
Idhar Shāhān-e-Kābul ki nazron se dūr.[1]

(On that side there was anarchy in the Delhi Empire, on this side they were far away from the sight of the kings of Kabul).

Factors in favour of the Sikhs

At this time the Sikhs were the most powerful people in the whole of India. They were well knit by religion based on the principles of "full brotherhood and the democratic organisation." A Muslim historian of that period wrote:

"This sect abounds in giant-sized and lion-limbed youths whose stroke of the leg would certainly cause instantaneous death to a Vilayati Qipchaq horse. Their matchlock strikes a man at a distance of nine hundred footsteps and each of them covers two hundred *kos* (600 kms) on horseback."[2]

George Thomas, another contemporary, who frequently came into contact with the Sikhs wrote:

"When mounted on horseback, their black flowing locks, and half-naked bodies, which are formed in the stoutest and most athletic mould, the glittering of their arms, and the size and speed of their horses, render their appearance imposing and formidable, and superior to meet most of the cavalry in Hindostan."[3]

In 1754 Tahmas Khan Miskin saw with his own eyes three Sikh horsemen driving away before them a full regiment of Turki

[1] *Muzaffargarh District Gazetteer*, 1908, p. 30.
[2] *Imad-us-Saadat*, 71.
[3] *Memoirs*, 73; of Francklin, *Shah Aulum*, 77.

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soldiers under Qasim Khan between Patti and Lahore.[1] Qazi Nur Muhammad who met the Sikhs in 1765 recorded that the Sikhs scrupulously abstained from other women except their wives.[2] Major Polier, a Swiss officer in the Mughal service at Delhi, wrote in May, 1776: "Five hundred of Najaf Khan's horse dare not encounter fifty Sikh horsemen."[3]

At this Sir Jadunath Sarkar observed: "This astonishing superiority man for man, over all other fighting forces of India, was due to the Sikh character, training and organisation."[4]

As regards their character, George Forster wrote in 1783: "Their successes and conquests have largely originated from an activity unparalleled by other Indian nations, from their endurance of excessive fatigue, and a keen resentment of injuries. The personal endowments of the Sicques are derived from a temperance of diet, and a forbearance from many of those sensual pleasures which have enervated the Indian Mahometans."[5] Sir Lepel Griffin stated: "One thing in their favour must be said, which raises them far above the Pindaris of Central India or the Dacoits of Bengal: they fought and plundered like men, and not like demons. There are few stories in Sikh History of outrage to women and torture to men such as stain the pages of South Indian History with cruelty and blood."[6]

The Sikh chiefs maintained good government in the territory directly under their control. They gave full protection to the cultivator and trader, and charged them nominal taxation. James Browne wrote:

"They collect a very moderate rent, and that mostly in kind, and during any intestine disputes, their soldiery never molest husbandmen."[7] There was another factor in their humane administration. The Sikh sardars were generally busy in constant warfare either against their enemies or among themselves. The administration was carried on by their sardarnis, all of whom are highly spoken of for establishing good government in their territories.

[1]Tahmas Khan Miskin, *Tazkirah*.
[2]*Asiatic Annual Register for* 1800, *Miscellaneous Tracts*, p. 34; Sarkar, *Fall*, III, 148; George Forster, I, 285-91.
[3]*Fall*, III.
[4]George Forster, I, 333.
[5]*Jang Namah*, 172-75.
[6]Sir Lepel Griffin, *Rajas of the Punjab*, 17.
[7]James Browne, *India Tracts*,i x.

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FACTORS AGAINST THEM

Too strong spirit of individual freedom

In the Khalsa brotherhood there was no distinction of rank, position, or special status between man and man. Every one of them was a sardar. The misldar's only duty was to guide his followers in warlike activities and to serve as an arbiter in times of peace. Beyond this he could not exercise his authority over them. The Sikhs paid due regard to their chief and treated him respectfully. They carried out only such of his orders as involved the interest of the Panth or their own personal advantage. Beyond this they were not under obligation to obey him. George Forster wrote in 1783:

"Though orders are issued in a Sicque army, and a species of obedience observed, punishments are rarely inflicted."[1]

It was in this way that the misldar could retain them in his service. A little of arrogance, trifling injustice and insignificant neglect of their interests was sufficient to make them desert his service, and join another misldar who was ever ready to welcome them into his own band. Therefore even the humblest and lowest Sikh horseman asserted his independence completely without any fear or hesitation. George Forster, the keen observer of men and their manners, observed:

"An equality of rank is maintained in their civil society which no class of men, however wealthy or powerful, is suffered to break down."[2]

In a Gurmata or grand convention or general council of the Panth every member of the Khalsa brotherhood had the right and privilege to express his views on the subject of discussion, and he was listened to with full attention. The decision was taken by majority votes, though more often unanimously.

The too much of individual freedom was not conducive to their unity of command and action in the absence of any common danger to the Panth or people. For political unity and good organisation, submission to the higher authority was essential, and this was lacking among the brave Khalsa.

[1]Forster, *Journey*, I, 329.
[2]ibid.

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Spirit of Faction

The strong spirit of individual freedom developed the spirit of faction among numerous chiefs. There were hundreds of Sikh sardars, each pursuing an independent interest without any regard for common policy. It created feelings of mutual jealousy and rivalry, and non-cooperation in the nation's interest. A misldar turned against another misldar. The various sardars in the same misl raised their arms against one another. A common trooper was hostile to the other. For what? For land and lucre, power and pelf. A few examples may be quoted in this connection.

Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and Jai Singh Kanhiya, each head of his own misl, worked together in Gurdaspur and Hoshiarpur districts. Their territories lay mingled up here and there. They fell out on the loot of Kasur in May, 1763, and both the sardars became bitter enemy of each other, and were often engaged in mutual warfare.

In October, 1765, a body of the Sikhs invaded the country of Najib-ud-daulah. Raja Amar Singh of Patiala came to his help in expelling the Sikhs.

In 1774 a quarrel arose between Ranjit Dev of Jammu and his son Brij Raj Dev. Both sought Sikh help. Jhanda Singh Bhangi supported Ranjit Dev, while Kanhiyas and Sukarchakias helped the son. Kanhiyas got Jhanda Singh murdered at Jammu.

Pathankot was held by the widow of Nand Singh, a sardar of the Bhangi Misl. She married her daughter to a member of the Kanhiya Misl, and gave away Pathankot in dowry. Ganda Singh, successor of Jhanda Singh, demanded Pathankot. The Kanhiyas refused to surrender it. In battle Ganda Singh lost his life. His brother Charat Singh attacked Pathankot, but was killed in the engagement. Thus the most powerful Sikh Misl began to decline rapidly. In the battle of Dinanagar in 1775 Jassa Singh Ramgarhia joined the Bhangi Misl against the combined forces of Kanhiya, Sukarchakia and Ahluwalia Misls.

Jassa Singh Ahluwalia attacked Zahura which belonged to Ramgarhias and gave it to Baghel Singh Karorasinghia in 1775.

Some time afterwards Jassa Singh Ahluwalia fell into the hands of Ramgarhia men. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia apologised to him, rebuked his men, treated the sardar with the greatest respect, gave him presents and sent him to his home under proper escort. The Ahluwalia chief did not forget the insult. He joined Jai Singh Kanhiya and drove the Ramgarhias into the desert country beyond Hissar.

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In 1779 Baghel Singh got Gajpat Singh, Raja of Jind, arrested by the Mughals.

Gajpat Singh of Jind got Desu Singh of Kaithal arrested in 1779 by Abdul Ahad Khan.

Jai Singh Kanhiya and Mahan Singh Sukarchakia were in league together for mutual advantage in securing territory and booty. They broke away over the plunder of Jammu.

In March, 1783, in the Diwan-e-Am, Red Fort, at Delhi, the two Jassa Singhs broke with each other over the honour the Sikhs wanted to confer on the Ahluwalia chief.

In 1787 Ghulam Qadir Rohilla attacked Delhi. Gurdit Singh of Ladwa and Baghel Singh of Chhalondi and several other Sikh chiefs joined him, while Bhanga Singh of Thanesar supported Emperor Shah Alam II.

Little regard for formal agreements or treaties or neighbours

The Sikhs attached no importance whatsoever to agreements and treaties formally entered into with solemn oaths by God They would make and break promises and contracts in the same breath. All other powers of India wished to maintain friendly relations with them, but could place no reliance on their compacts and settlements. Mahadji Sindhia alone trusted them. His ambassador Ambaji Ingle formed a provisional treaty with them on March 30, 1785. Immediately after that the Sikh vakils met Sir John Cumming, Colonel commanding a British brigade at Anupshahar on the Ganga. They disclosed to him the treaty telling him that they would not abide by it, and sought an alliance with the British. The Colonel informed the Governor-General about their interview on April 11, 1785. Some other Sikh agents waited upon Major William Palmer, the Resident at Lucknow, telling him about the treaty with Sindhia and seeking an agreement with the British authorities. Palmer informed Warren Hastings, the Governor-General, on April 17, 1785, about it.

Mahadji Sindhia ratified Ingle's treaty with the Sikhs on May 9, 1785. On the same day in the evening a Sikh vakil in the disguise of a cloth hawker visited the camp of James Anderson, British Resident at the court of Sindhia. In the course of cloth bargain with his Munshi he told him that he had some diamonds for sale and would show them in privacy. He disclosed to him his identity, the nature of the treaty, decision of his chiefs not to follow the

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agreement and to form an alliance against Sindhia with the English. James Anderson firmly told him that "the English and Sindhia are certainly connected in the firmest friendship."

This clearly shows that the Sikhs were mere warriors and not statesmen-Warriors.

No desire to annex territories outside Panjab

The Sikhs lacked political vision. They cherished no desire to occupy territories beyond the boundaries of Panjab. They considered the neighbouring countries as a source of booty only, or at best a land to realise rākhi or protection money. Almost the entire gold of the Ganga Doāb and Rohilkhand as well as the best cattle and goods poured into Panjab. Too much of gold and too many milch buffaloes blurred their vision, blighted their wits and bedaubed their wisdom. It shows that the military capacity of the Sikhs was great, but their political insight was nil.

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